TWENTY YEARS IN THE CHURCH.

An Autobiography.

BY THE

REV. JAMES PYCROFT, B.A.

TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD,

AUTHOR OF "WAYS AND WORDS OF MEN OF LETTERS," ETC.

FOURTH EDITION.

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PREFACE.

"TWENTY Years in the Church!" But are not the Laity members of the Church as well as the Clergy?

I reply, that the precise expression, "being in the Church," is generally understood of the Clergy alone. The title is more descriptive than any other I could select.

The sketches are from life. Real persons and scenes have been before me, and in some parts I have been obliged to resort to new combinations to spare private feeling.

I have long observed, that there is a reality and interest in any plain newspaper report, as of a trial or a shipwreck, which vividly contrasts with any page of fiction, however ingenious.

I therefore resolved to tell "things that I did know," and once more to adopt that Photographic or Pre-Raphaelite style to which the success of my "Recollections of College Days" was chiefly owing.

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J. P.

Battlewick Hill,
July 20th, 1859.

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Thirty Reviewers, nearly all more or less favourable, have assisted me by a notice. In one point, five out of six agree, namely,—in praising the "life-like" and the "intense reality" of the story.

I have simply to say, that I could easily furnish a key to every character, and give the original of nearly every speech. If I am told that "enough is not made of Ellen, or of Brereton," I reply that two sources of interest are available to a writer:—the one, dramatic effect, the other, truth and nature; and I determined that I would not sacrifice truth by drawing characters I had never known, and in positions in which I had never seen them.

I am happy to accept the early demand for a Second Edition as a proof that, like the child delighted with a fairy tale, a reader never so fully gives vent to his feelings of admiration as when he is satisfied that it is "all true."

J. P.

Bathwick Hill, Bath,
October 21st, 1859.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

I HAVE gratefully to acknowledge a demand for a Third Edition within the first year of publication. The objection that all the experience of "twenty years" is not contained in this volume has been met by *Elkerton Rectory*, in which work the Rev. Henry Austin appears in a new sphere of action, and surrounded by a new set of characters.

J. P.

July 20th, 1860.

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TWENTY YEARS IN THE CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

HOW I WAS BORN, BRED, PUT TO SCHOOL, AND SENT TO COLLEGE.

My name is Henry Austin. I was born of honest and respectable parents—a fact of which I should be the more proud, if the same thing did not happen to be said of too many characters, even in the *Newgate Calendar*. The Austins were reputed a good Berkshire family. We could not boast of the blood of any Norman in our veins: however, if I may believe what I have lately read, that they were only "a parcel of savage pirates and filthy thieves," so much the better for our constitutions.—It was thought a great thing that no trade had ever yet been known in our family, though the natural result was that each generation had more pride and fewer pence.

We had no title—no handle to our name: so, we were reduced to extract as much honour as we could out of the indefinite article, and I often heard I was "*An* Austin." Some old china, some battered plate, one pap-boat having the mark of my grandmother's tooth in it, some scraps of point lace, rusty swords, and Indian ornaments, all served to connect us with the past, and with the world's history, as also to astonish the maids, and to make them teach us the earliest of all nursery lessons, that we had a right "to hold our little heads up."

All I know of my birth is, that I was born in lambing season. My father had taken to gentleman-farming, and was too busy about his sheep to know what had happened in-doors for some hours. Indeed, I was no great novelty, so I was not made much

of, being the sixth child, though only five lived long enough to have a turn at the baby-clothes.

I can easily describe our house. As you whiz, grind, or screech along a railway, you often see a tea-caddy house of red brick, with a portico in the middle, and wings at the sides, all alone and dreary, looking like a lunatic asylum on a small scale: indeed, madness may well breed in such places; for, muddy brains, like ditch-water, grow bad and "maggoty" from sheer stagnation. Well, ours was a house of this kind; grass grew and cows strayed on the gravel—even the door-bell would have rusted, had it not been for the letter-carrier. Visitors came so seldom it made one nervous, and nothing was ever quite in order when they did come. And this little disappointment, however trivial it may seem to some people, was really among the number of my mother's trials in this life.

Perhaps the yellow satin had been—how provoking!—covered up only that very morning, and the drawing-room fire only that day countermanded. Then the dinner-parties—we could not contrive with less than one every three months—were something serious. For, considering the stupid servants, no one to help, everything to give out and polish, and everything to put away again, the waste of the professed cook, and the airs she gave herself, as well as the riot and "high-life-below-stairs" with the "pampered menials," who came two to every carriage—the infliction was so cruel, that what with our annoyance at blunders past, and our dread of more mishaps at the party next to come, it really embittered my poor mother's existence. But no matter: on we went; still grumbling, still doing it, like other people, to the end of the chapter.

Such was the scene of my rearings. From an early age my father intended me for the Church. Aunt Charlotte, who was always spoken of as a religious woman in our family (a little religion went a long way in those days), used to visit us about once a-year, and was anxiously looked for, like other maiden aunts, as the natural source of sugar-plums and playthings: though occasionally she disappointed some of the elder ones by taking a Bible and Prayer-book, with clasps and morocco binding, from its silver-paper wrapper, and presenting it as a more appropriate present than tops and dolls. A child's face at such a moment were a study for a painter.

This good aunt used also to inquire about family prayers and Sunday arrangements, and would try to convey a delicate insinuation that, with all reverence for our parents, we children might

venture to have a little more regard for our souls' health than some people. Now, being this kind of good aunt, what wonder that she should at once accept the news of Harry being "intended for the Church," as a virtual challenge for no small display of theological polemics!

"Intended for the Church?" she exclaimed. "My dear Austin, how can you talk so? That thoughtless boy in the holland pinafore?"

"But he won't be a boy, or thoughtless either, always, Charlotte."

"My dear brother, how can you tell? Dear me! intended for the Church! Why, he is as giddy as his own top, and has manifested, of course, no kind of disposition whatever."

"Now there you are wrong, Charlotte," said my father; "only last week he came sprawling down in the nursery, and almost broke his neck, from a pyramid of chairs, piled up as a pulpit, and he with the nurse's apron on as a surplice."

Of course the reply was very obvious, but the joke was very discomposing: and meanwhile I played about and spun my top, very thankful that I was not thought old enough for one of Aunt Charlotte's Prayer-books.

My father might have argued, that the man who seriously purposed to train the most promising of his sons for the ministry purposed a good work, and that if any disqualification appeared in course of years, the destination might be reconsidered; that as to regarding the Church as a livelihood, as well as a sphere of usefulness, if God had been pleased to join duty and comfort together, why need man put the same asunder? Also that, supposing the only alternative to be tried—supposing all youths to be trained alike, and a decided call or inward prompting to be awaited as the only grounds for special preparation, and that too at an age when things serious find no genial sphere, but require, at the best, both culture and forcing—that this plan for recruiting our army of heavenly warriors was so chimerical, and would give our arch-enemy such advantage, that it were hard to believe the great Captain of our salvation ever intended so exclusive a selection.

All this my father might have argued; and supposing the decisions of this life, even the most momentous of them, were ordinarily drawn from legitimate premises, like the answer to a rule-of-three sum, such might have been expected as the reasoning process which made me what—ah, what!—I am.

But men act from mixed motives. I was thought too tender-hearted for a doctor: as to the army, and being a "captain bold,"

"not one of them," said my father, "I ever knew, could 'keep a one-pound note in his regimental small-clothes.'" Brother Tom was booked by Uncle Ben to be a lawyer, and it only remained to make Harry the parson. Indeed, my father's associations ran that way. His nose had been (in visions) "tickled with tithe pig-tail." "Fat Rector" rang in his ears, and formed an adjective and substantive indissoluble on his tongue. Besides, parsons were usually steady-going men, and hereon hung a tale.

Wherever the family tree has many branches, perched at the end of one of them sits a bird of ill omen—foreboding storms; croaking prophecies, like Cassandra's, never believed till too late; or, raising uncomfortable sensations of future woe, to take the taste out of present pleasures; and that bird—whose neck every one, times out of number, has longed to twist—is *the* man of business; or family trustee, executor, or adviser in ordinary; and is generally called "Old So-and-so." Such was the family office discharged by my poor father. He grew year by year more rigid and more strict,—so, of course, more unpopular. His standard of prudence was anything but a sliding scale. He expected the same "making both ends meet," however fast a man's family outgrew his income. He eyed on the dining-table an extra pudding or a side-dish, less as a compliment to his visit than as a premonitory symptom of certain ruin.

We may easily suppose he was no favourite; and once when a family gathering was proposed for Christmas-day, my mother slily hinted that she hoped the pudding would prove a little better mixture than the company. So, it came to pass that my father was the family martyr. He was indeed a very—yes, a very useful—ay, an invaluable man in the family; but no one liked him the better for all that: rather say, they had a distant respect for him. Cousin Jane was cool to him, because he would not shift her consols into her brother-in-law John Mill's business. John Mills, having suspended cash payments almost as soon as my father's "crabbed letter" was received, wore ever after a most enforced civility. Aunt Charlotte secretly blamed him for her single-blessedness. She was once engaged to a charming young clergyman, but my father argued that his four hulking pupils ate as much as they paid for, and could in no manner of ways enter into any decent marriage settlement. In short, nearly all the circle had found him a marplot at some time or other; and, though foolish and fatal were the plots he marred, no allowance was made for that. The only relative who stood up for him was a clerical brother-in-law, a man of facts and figures, who never outran, so

never worried him for indulgences. The even tenour of this staid rector's ways won upon my father's mind, and was one more argument for the profession of the Church.

But did this man of business aforesaid ever calculate the prizes of the Church as he would the prizes of a lottery? Did he ever compare the sum total of Church preferment with the cost of education, which is as the purchase-money of a ticket to entitle his son to draw? No, never! otherwise he would have learnt that every farthing expended in the hope of a return would be a most unprofitable investment. Better far have bought me an annuity and left my labour disposable for other earnings. In other words, he would have found that the clergy, as a body, give their services for little or nothing—a truly wonderful instance of class generosity; save that very few clergymen are at all aware how the ghost of Cocker would frown upon their investments.

For all these reasons, I was "intended for the Church." I grant the reasons were bad enough; but how often is it that poor human nature acts on better?

"Then you admit that your parents did not give you from childhood any special training or education for the holy calling thus intended?"

Certainly they did not; and considering how such religious training is commonly attempted by persons most likely to put this question, I consider it a happy thing that I had none of it. A model for a religious book for a child is found in the more serious pages of *Robinson Crusoe*. Crusoe's finding a Bible, and having his mind awakened to a sense of religion, arises so naturally from the incidents of the tale, that a child falls insensibly into the same train of thought: whereas, any formal paragraphs, intended expressly for his instruction, would be skipped and passed by as a sham. On the contrary, a youth who is often said to have had inestimable advantages in a religious family, has, perhaps, been sickened with serious advice out of time and out of season, and has heard the name of the Almighty so often associated with childish peccadillos of tops and marbles, that the spell is broken for ever.

I have known sons of evangelical pastors—men revered for their piety all the country round; and I have known not a few of those sons wring their parents' hearts with deeds of shame, till they would say, "Would they had never been born!" And to what was this cruel disappointment owing? Simply to this: If once habitually by word, look, or deed, you demand of a child the seriousness and perfection of later years, your unreasonable

demand is met by a counterfeit supply, and you receive a discount in sheer hypocrisy. What must be that character which results from acting a lie in contempt of the highest sanction all the day long? Still, such is the popular notion of religious training—the sons of even thoughtless, worldly men, have, in my opinion, no spiritual disadvantages to compare with such enforced religion.

But we were educated less by the ear than by the eye. Take warning, parents; it is not what you say, but what you mean, what you are and what you do, that your child will follow. So, we had teaching by an example of perfect sincerity and truth. As to truth, my poor mother was all transparency; she could no more deceive than her favourite brindled cow: and she wore exactly the same guileless and innocent expression of calm serenity and contentment.

What my mother said was a sun-picture of the truth. My father used to say he could read the very process of her thoughts, like watching bees in a glass hive: he, too, was an honest man, upright and straightforward in all his course of life, but not so honest as my mother. My father was honest out of principle; but my mother was honest because she could not help it—just like the cow. Had there been no law and no gospel, my mother would have been honest all the same; indeed her verity and truth, and her simple artlessness, were quite a joke in the family.

My mother was one of the old school; her education had been rather useful than ornamental. I do not undervalue the elegancies of life; but, Music where there is no ear, Drawing where there's no correct eye, and miscellaneous scraps of everything which you may draw out in a moment, like a skein from a thread-paper, and leave no trace behind, this kind of accomplishments,—especially when they are made the daily vehicle of an insidious poison to the soul, as if display and effect were the beginning and the end of life to those dear creatures, who only want some fond direction and a genial sphere to bless and grace the goings out and comings in of harassed and laborious man—all this tinsel and French varnish might well give place to Mrs. Glass and household lore.

"What we want," said Napoleon, "is wise mothers." How many mothers rear their daughters without resource, teaching them to regard all they learn as a means to an end, and that a very precarious end; one often not realised at all, and yet more frequently a compromise—the name without the dignity, to say nothing of the happiness of married life. "Hope delayed makes the heart sick." Moonshine visions present themselves—the morbid creations of distempered brains—their present state being wretched,

they conclude some other must be happy. They think there is a cup of bliss for them, if they could but find it. Then, some think of being "Sisters of Charity," though fine-grown girls in the "School of Scandal;" others must be lady-teachers, themselves having everything to learn; while other relics of the "Middle Ages" sigh for retreats, and the way to Rome, or think their case would be suited by something more akin to their own Mediæval system.

I am not describing all ladies—not those who soberly and piously do home duties first, and find time to help the clergy afterwards; but only the silly daughters of silly mothers, who know no home duties, and are grievously disappointed in not being themselves the silly parents of another silly generation.—"I have no patience with such girls," said my mother; "nervous, idle, and sighing all day long. In my time, we were set to work the Ten Commandments on a sampler; my pretty little cherub breathing 'Amen' at the bottom was pronounced excellent. As to being nervous, why no one used to think of being nervous under sixty, or fifty-five at the very least! You would say we had no accomplishments, but I am sure we had quite enough; for, whether it is a quarter's this or a quarter's that, or something ological the other, it all goes off before the first baby: and a good thing too, or I am sure the dear little innocent would starve. To 'accomplish' a husband, that is the meaning of it all. Not that I think it often does. Instead of that, we were so taught as to win a husband after we had married him; for, when you are as old as I am, my dears, you will know that he is never half won before. When the table-cloth is in holes, the dinner all spoilt, your money very short, and your bills very long, you must be wonderfully accomplished to make up for that."

As to religious impressions and devotional exercises, our catechisings, and collects, and readings, besides twice at church, or the whole service at home on rainy Sundays, and above all, a Blair's sermon in the evening, while we, understanding not a word, fidgeted and yawned our little heads half off—all this went on with such perseverance and regularity that, seeing our parents never could do it without an urgent motive, and we thought it marvellous they could do it at all, since they were not, like us, obliged—nothing could have done more to make a deep impression on our youthful minds.

Certainly, this does not seem much to set down as the sum and substance of my moral and religious training for the ministry from an early age; and I have only to add, that we were

encouraged and patted on the head when we did well, and patted somewhere else when we did ill. Still, I am fully satisfied, if that would not do nothing would. Here was enough to drop the seed to spread into a mighty tree—enough to give the true leaven to leaven every habit and every feeling of the future man.

Such, then, was our education in-doors; but out of doors were influences very active, though very subtle, and not the less educational because operating without books, or rods, or classes—not paid for by the quarter, nor even set down in a long list of extras. There was our grey and ivy-mantled village church—my pet jackdaw was bred in the tower of it; there was also the long avenue and the rookery, down which the Sunday schools and the red cloaks of Molly Woodman, Betty Milsom, and Susan Graves, formed a Sunday procession in honour of our holy cause. All looked reality! Reality? The Sabbath bell and Sabbath throng seemed as real and as natural as the circling of the cawing rooks; and the old church, which seemed to sink deeper and deeper as the gravedigger threw up earth around its buttresses, appeared to grow as naturally out of the earth as the very elms that shed their deep shade around its walls.

Thus I used to read "sermons in stones," or if not sermons, the best "evidences of Christianity"—the most impressive and the most lasting—that any Paley or any Butler ever wrote. Yet, how little were those rural dames and village children conscious of the impression they were making on my childish mind! The square pew to our right represented the testimony of Captain Townsend, and his large house and frequent visitors, to the truth. Sir Edward Astill appeared regularly, with his tall sons and well-flounced daughters, on the other side: so, between rich and poor, I saw a host of monitors. Though one thing jarred on my young and, so far, uncorrupted feelings, namely, that the footmen and coachmen of those gentlemen came in late and went out early—a practice which was pointedly expressed by the Rev. Sydney Smith, when he said, "We are all equal in the house of God, but at ten minutes to one our servants must go for our cabs." These respectable church-goers were, in one sense, my spiritual instructors. But how little did they think of the seeds they were sowing in my youthful mind! All they saw was a restless little animal, sometimes on the seat, sometimes off, sometimes looking in the book in which his mamma had pointed out his place, and sometimes gazing on vacancy, or exciting the frowns of his father by telegraphing with his lips to the children of the charity school; and yet, the faithful discharge of their Sabbath duty was affecting even him!

But, if these were my examples, Tom Exton was my caution. "Mamma," I once said, "why doesn't Tom Exton come to church?"

"Tom Exton, my dear? Say, Mr. Exton!"

"Why, papa always says Tom Exton. I heard him say, 'Now, Tom, I can't bear this,' when he swore so wickedly to his horse at the end of the lane. But why doesn't he come to church? has anybody let him off coming? Oh dear, I do get so tired sometimes!" Of course, I was told no one could "let him off coming," that swearing was wicked, and not coming to church was wicked. From that day Tom Exton, one of those young sporting and reckless characters who attain to a fortune long before the years of discretion, was called "the wicked man" in our nursery—a touching reproach, if he had but heard it.

How are the wild fields planted? How is it that the plants of one unpeopled clime have found their way into another?—The winds and the waves, and the birds of the air, transport the seeds, and supply the place of human agency. This is not chance; it is all designed in the counsels of the Most High.

And, are these the only seeds? are there no seeds of a spiritual kind dropped here and there at His bidding, though by unconscious ministers of His will? Surely there are. And this should be our warning to persevere in one life-long course of childlike obedience, "doing as we are bid, and not asking why," but leaving the result to Almighty Wisdom.

But, shall we really be satisfied with this casual and incidental instruction, and with apparently so little serious attention to a child's highest interest?—Let us consider the question. Honesty, and truth, and benevolence are also a part of a child's highest interest; yet we all consent to inculcate these virtues only incidentally, with a word here and an admonition there, as occasion suggests. And why attempt to teach a child's duty to his God on any other system? Theology or Bible lessons are one thing, but piety is another. The one is the mere filling of the head, the other is a principle of the heart. The one is derived from the father, or the masters he deputes; the other—a child's religion, his spiritual sense—in a great majority of cases is cultivated by the mother alone.

Such, at least, was my case. To me, Religion was always more lovely and attractive as seen in woman. There was ever an austerity and roughness in the character of man. Whenever I dreamt dreams, or saw visions of angels—and who has not?—they all appeared in the female form. My mother was all sym-

pathy and loving-kindness. We could go to her with a confession, but with my father we never dreamt of such a thing. It is seldom a father serves as father confessor; indeed, a *father* confessor I never could conceive. How the Roman Catholic priest succeeds with the gentlemen I cannot imagine. With me, he would act like a non-conductor; though, a *mother* confessor seems natural enough.

Oh, there are moments when woman is far mightier than her lord! The steel-clad knight may dash through bars, and burst the castle gates; but, for access to the secrets of the stony heart, or to bend the iron will, "Commend me to the Queen of Beauty's power."—See how the rude and icy avalanche defies the wintry blast, but melts and yields before the solar rays!

Such is the power and responsibility of the Christian mother. But let me not deceive you, ladies. This Christian influence has no kind of connexion with talking religion, or keeping up religious appearances as an example to your children. It depends on *being* religious. I have known more than one thoughtless couple, without an instinct of devotion in either of them, introduce family prayers and formal observances expressly as an example and as a duty, because their children were leaving the nursery. Poor, pitiable, ignorant souls!—though better this than nothing. Little hope, indeed, is there of piety being instilled by such a mother as this! How little do you know of the infant mind!

Speech is but one vehicle of knowledge. There is also the language of the eye, and the hieroglyphics of every feature, which your babe can decipher. Did you never see the angry scowl of an evil-minded nurse passing as a dark cloud over the infant's brow?—Even so is there a mysterious law of sympathy that brings the feelings of the infant into harmony and unison with the mother's heart.

By the time we leave the nursery the good seed is sown, and commonly the process is this,—the mother plants the seed in infancy, care and affliction water and revive it in later years, and God gives the increase.

But I must confine myself to such parts of my life and adventures as will exemplify my preparation for the Church. And it is not less a training and preparation, because man thinks little of the end to which such means conduce. God ruleth over all; and all the selfish interests of man,—all the petty streams of rivalry and ambition, of money-making and self-pleasing in every shape—ay, and even malice, envy, and the worst of passions,—all, all are instruments in His hands,—all find their dark and troubled waters diverted to His high purposes,—all help to turn the mighty machinery of the world that He hath created. We can even

imagine the worst of feelings turned to the best account, and man's fury and passion, like "the wind and the storm, fulfilling His word."

The reason I am so particular about my nursery education is that there are hundreds of nurseries much like ours, where the Curates, Rectors, and Bishops of from twenty to fifty years hence, are trotting about in pinafores at this very time; and I am here following the fortunes of my brethren from the cradle to the grave. It is well that people should see us as we are; for the less they form unreasonable expectations, the less they will cry out when they happen to discover that we are only something better than themselves.

At nine years of age, I was sent to the Boltley Grammar-school, my mother having divers and sundry scruples lest I should hear bad words and see wicked practices. Little did she know the evil lessons that I had ample opportunity of learning at home. As I had few playfellows, the vulgar talk of the maids in-doors and the men about the farm formed the staple commodity of my pastimes.

Our men-servants and our maid-servants too had, in all probability, been reared in a cottage, with that abomination—for which every rich proprietor deserves to be indicted by the Society for the Suppression of Vice—one sleeping-room for both young and old. Of course, there is a prudery of tone and an assumed propriety of conduct, which it is as much part of a servant's business to acquire as dusting or ironing, and not much more a part of their natural character; and this propriety they all contrived to affect in my mother's presence, relapsing at once into their own native coarseness the moment the nursery-door was closed.

"Rural simplicity" and "village innocence" are pretty poetical terms. And the "purity of Home Education" is a fallacy of the same kind. If mothers lived, or could live in their nursery, or if they could always afford nursery-governesses of the habits of ladies to supply their place, the last of these terms might have some little meaning. But "rural innocence" commonly means "vice innocent of disguise." The rural deity has changed his pipe of modern days for one that breathes not melody, but tobacco; but all the grosser vices of his Arcadian majesty remain as rife and as pestilent as of old. Yet this was the sphere—so chaste and so chastening, as seen at the distance or on its brighter side—to which the piety of good Aunt Charlotte—could her consols have afforded a tutor, good, bad, or indifferent—would undoubtedly have committed "that giddy boy," in order properly *to prepare him for the Church.*

But, God ruleth over all. The yearnings of the warmest hearts —the earnest prayers of the most anxious parents—are often in very mercy denied. The husbandman would like to command showers upon this field and sunshine upon that, as confidently as if he knew all the mysteries of creative power. The parent would be equally anxious to rear and to cultivate his own children in his own way. This temper he would encourage by the sunshine of happy days; that temper he would correct by some less genial season. While most parents would agree in avoiding every temptation —thus teaching to swim in shallow water, and deferring the first possibility of sinking to that ocean of life in which so many are ready to keep us down, and so few are the friendly hands to bear us up.

Next to a mole, the blindest animal in creation is a parent. Blind, because affection is a delusive medium. Blind, because he identifies himself with his child, and is subject to all the delusions of self-love. But the child is anything but blind to the parent's faults. No one knows so little of the weakness of the child's character as his own father; no one knows so much of the weakness of the father's character as his own son. This is a fact admitted by every man in his neighbour's case—though, of course, "contrary to the hypothesis" that it should be admitted in his own. It seems, therefore, really providential, that the education of youths intended for the ministry should be so generally conducted far from the supposed pure sphere of home, and far from parental blindness. It seems providentially intended that boys, like birds and rabbits, should soon be scattered from the parent's nest and the parent's wing.

Accordingly, it was time I swam in deeper and more troubled waters: and, behold a trembling little urchin at eight o'clock on a cold morning in January, with his back to the wall at one end of the school, and his eye nervously directed to a green-baize door at the other, through which the master was momentarily expected, with as much horror as a Royal Bengal Tiger escaping from a menagerie.

Enters a bald-headed man in a gown—walks straight down the room—catches sight of "new boy"—approaches within goring or tossing distance—fixes both his eyes like horns to pierce him through, and says,—

"Boy, what's your name?"

New Boy (almost in a whisper): "Henry Austin, sir."

Master (in sharpest and most impatient key): "What d'ye call y'self?—Speak out!—What ye afraid of?—Well, I knew

you were coming; but how should I know which was Austin or which was Jones?"

The old man had never heard of nerves, not even nerves olfactory: for, I have not forgotten that when in later years we had waxed bolder, and so far carried the war into the enemy's country as to rub his desk with assafœtida, the way the old man tried—though he tried at last in vain—to ignore the infliction was, to our sensitive nostrils, truly wonderful.

I cannot dwell long on my school days, though the seven years at Boltley were really what school days ought to be—a life in miniature, a fair sample and one complete pattern cut off from the gradually unfolding roll of this life's varied tapestry. The question is, How far is such school life a preparation for the Church? what religion did they teach us? what serious advice? and so forth.—All I remember is "school prayers" and church on Sundays, and on Mondays Greek Testament and Watts's Scripture History; which last system of serving up holy things minced up into half-and-half questions and answers is the most execrable ever invented. Why not read and catechise upon the pure Word of God chapter by chapter as it is?

However, old Griskin succeeded to the bad books and prejudices, just as he succeeded to the desks and forms, of Boltley Grammar-school; and though this was all the religious instruction we had, except now and then a lecture when anything very flagitious had been committed, still we were made responsible for as many talents as was usual then, or, as I believe, now. We lived strictly under the "Law." Whether this state of discipline, this "law, was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ"—whether an inexorable system teaching obedience, order, industry, self-denial, and "bringing into captivity every thought," while every day of our lives God's word sounded in our ears—"whether they would hear or whether they would forbear"—whether this is a bad preparation—I leave all thoughtful persons maturely to weigh and to consider. At the same time they should take boys' nature duly into their calculation.

My own opinion is that the system, as a system, you can hardly mend, though systems at best are like the dry bones in the valley of Ezekiel, and we want—yes, my reader will suggest that we want—an Arnold to breathe on them to make "these dry bones live." But with all reverence for one who has done so much to elevate the office of the educator to that dignity and respect which it challenges as the noblest science, I fear that most exaggerated notions are formed of Arnold's success in Rugby School.

That there was a *vivida vis animi*—an intensity and truthfulness in that distinguished man, and that, meeting here and there with a congenial spirit, he lit up a kindred fire in the youthful heart, and that the same high principle may pass from father to son, as God shows His mercy unto thousands (of generations) of them that love Him, by the increase He hath attached to all good seeds,—this I believe, and this is Dr. Arnold's highest praise. Still, both Mr. Stanley and "Tom Brown" bear witness that there were many boys indeed beyond Arnold's power to influence. At Oxford I saw many of his pupils, "clean beasts by twos," but "unclean beasts by sevens," and strongly do I suspect that nineteen out of twenty of the Rugbeans had spiritual advantages no higher than we possessed under old Griskin. The said old Griskin personified the harshness of the Law, and I think it a happy circumstance that he left Scripture to speak for itself, and rarely went out of his way to inculcate the sanctions of the Gospel. Certainly, a man of ardent piety must have done so; but old Griskin was Griskin still, and no one else. There are certain incompatible offices in this life. Such are those offices which require the human porcupine to carry his quills alternately up and down, without any allowance for the habits of the animal.

A hundred unruly boys and nearly as many unreasonable parents made the "natural man" stand on the defensive, both in school and out, from the beginning of the half-year to the end. The "spiritual man" could not, therefore, very suddenly appear. Old Griskin's march through life was like that of Hannibal making his way by vinegar; pardon, I pray, the infirmities of nature, if the milk of human kindness was somewhat sour.

On this point I dwell, because the spiritual advantages of the young are commonly measured by a very delusive and a very chimerical standard. It seems desirable to show what means to ends spiritual are practicable in schools. The "pastor" and the "master" are offices rarely compatible in any high degree. Even the father who teaches his own sons merges the softer character in the more severe, and often chills their affections for life. From the same fountain we cannot draw waters both bitter and sweet; and the magistrate who deals whippings and imprisonments on week-days can hardly preach persuasively on Sundays. I say, therefore, as regards moral and religious education, the mothers make the boys and the boys make the school. It is quite homœopathically, of course, that one solitary master perched high and dry can operate on the moral constitutions of a

hundred boys: as well expect strong beef tea because a solitary cow has tumbled into the Thames.

Still we learnt much at Boltley Grammar-school, however indirectly, of great value in the ministry. We learn to know ourselves, not measuring ourselves, as in private education, by our own standard. As to the roughs of school life, they served like the "pelting of the pitiless storm" to poor King Lear. "These are no flatterers, but feelingly remind us what we are." We learnt also to know each other. Thus we cultivated common sense, making our sense a common measure and learning to be in harmony with those around us. Many a man will start at these words, and wonder he could have been so long blind to the influences which made him what he is; like the Gentleman in Molière, who talked prose forty years without knowing it. Soft showers and sunshine are soon regarded as blessings, but it is less easy to perceive that frost and snow are blessings too, and less easy still to understand that a boy's nature may lie fallow sometimes, without dibbling and model-farming all the year.

So far, then, I served a seven-years' apprenticeship to practical philosophy while at school. I left seven years older in character as in years. I had been either whipped by old Griskin or kicked by the boys for each denomination of offence at all likely to be committed with more serious consequences in after life. One flogging I remember imprinted on me, in cherry-coloured hieroglyphics, not to shuffle or prevaricate, while old Griskin came out with his favourite maxim, "Almost the truth is the most artful lie you can tell, boy;" and sundry blows and kicks taught various lessons in minor ethics; and one of the most useful of all was this:—

> "They who in quarrels interpose,
> Must often wipe a bloody nose."

These are the points on which I dwell more than on the Latin and the Greek, though my progress did honour to my teacher. Yet not one parent in a hundred gives a thought to this training of the mind—this forming of the manners and the man. I believe that if poor old Griskin could have made his last school report by quoting with all reverence these holy words, He has "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man,"—I say I do in my heart believe, that this old Griskin would have gone out sighing, if he could have shown no more tangible return for my schooling than this. Still, my Latin and Greek have been replaced, my sums rubbed out, and my intel-

lectual artillery discharged and reloaded again and again, while my early habits and experience remain the same. I went to school, as the square peg to the round hole: and, by the time I left, I had found my place and bearings, and had learnt to move among my fellow-men with less and less of that friction which incongruous feelings excite.

A large school is a little world. While climbing in seven years from the bottom form to the top, I had passed, as it were, from youth to age. I had rectified my illicit spirits, and clarified my judgment of men and manners. I learnt, while walking through the crowd of life, neither to run against any one, nor to let any one run against me. I had been taught to feel my way with my neighbour's prejudices—to watch the cloud on an angry brow—to say enough and not too much, and to treat kindly and tenderly those little failings and conceits which make up the compound Man.

Charles Lamb speaks of men of imperfect sympathies. He means men who work not glibly and smoothly in the machinery of life, more like the grit than the oil in the social wheel—men of repulsive attraction—men in the hardware line—men who in conversation hold you to your word without the grace to fit their answer to your meaning. Of all the secrets of worldly success, or hourly happiness for ourselves or others, there is nothing like perfect sympathies—that good Samaritan feeling which pours oil into your wounds, gets off that you may ride, provides for you for the day, and even yearns into the morrow. "There 's such divinity doth hedge a king"—there 's such a balmy influence sheds its halo around a really sympathetic soul. Some musical buildings deliver us of our voice; some sympathetic people of our thoughts and feelings, their heart-strings being in perfect tone and unison with our own. This is a character invaluable to the minister as to the man, and for its first growth and culture there is no place like a public school exclusively of gentlemen. So, even if I had learnt "small Latin and less Greek," I still should have had cause to be grateful for seven years at Boltley.

But to continue the illustration of the square peg, as another means of making me *teres atque rotundus*—of course Horace means making the square peg round—I passed, as to another workroom in the machinery of life, to a new course of friction, or sphere of probation in the University of Oxford, already sketched in another work.*

"Oh, nice preparation for the ministry! Oh, pure and chaste

* "Recollections of College Days." Longman & Co.

sphere certainly! Do you expect us to forget the follies and the vanities for which the name of Oxonian and of Cantab has been for years a by-word?"

A sphere is pure by comparison, and pure with some allowance for the fact that, in this world, whatever the school, the college, or the community, "there is no man that doeth good; no, not one."

But, deny it who can, if there is one class of society in England of more social purity and rectitude of feeling than another, that class comprises the mothers, God bless them! whom Oxonians, amidst all their follies, instinctively revere. Secondly, if these good mothers have one son more promising than another, that son is the one selected for a University education; and, thirdly, if there is one city in England in which, pre-eminently, things of good report are fostered and things of evil report are counteracted, that city bears the time-honoured name of Oxford.

In other towns, men live to improve their fortunes; in Oxford, to improve themselves. In other towns, men are judged by their money; at Oxford, by their manners and their minds.

But, how far did those University studies bear upon the ministry?—Far more directly than we commonly suppose.

Imagine a fine summer's afternoon, every window in the college open, every room fresh with the verdure of those ancestral elms, and thrilling with the songs of the birds, so joyous in our college garden. Voices resound, and many feet grate upon the gravel, as some young men are hurrying to the boats, and some to Bullingdon and the cricket-grounds. Still, at this window, and at that, the rustling of paper or the dim outline of one deep in thought, betrays that some are able to defy the charms of nature and the pent-up energies of youth. What are they doing to persevere alone?—Ostensibly, they are mastering Thucydides or Aristotle, but in reality they are mastering themselves! Pleasure has struggled hard with duty, and duty has won!

But what of Aristotle? What of Thucydides? How does such learning qualify for the ministry?

The question lies simply between this and some other kind of study, while youths are growing into men.

Now, seeing that Theology receives its full share of attention, what can be more valuable than to study Man—human thought and human character—and to study Man under such varieties of age and clime as shall distinguish between individual peculiarities or the caprices of fashion, and the creature Man as his Creator made him? Some persons think Geology a preferable study; some would suggest Astronomy, or Chemistry, or any other science.

I am myself much interested in the various strata of the three series, nor do I look with indifference on the starry firmament above, or on organic substances below; but, as a choice in point of usefulness for a clergyman's life, I must maintain that "the proper study of mankind is man." The *nil admirari*—that knowledge of human nature which makes us surprised or disappointed at nothing, which enables us to identify every fault and foible, every virtue, vice, or passion, in many a scene and character in this world's drama, in an almost unbroken series, from Adam to the present day—this knowledge for the ministry claims precedence over all other sciences; and such are the chief studies of Oxford.

Some men examine curiously a Saxon coffin, or a mummy, or armour worn on Flodden Field, and boast a great discovery in inferring that the stature of man is at least as large as in former ages. With no less triumph do men pronounce on the structure of fish, or plants, or fossils, anterior to the flood. And; is it less curious, less a triumph, to penetrate and to analyse the thoughts and the feelings of past generations; to ascertain that for thousands of years the heart of man has throbbed with the same emotions, that envy and other passions have been the same torture to the breast; and that Conscience, in the days of Æschylus as in ours, has shaken the same avenging scourge over the guilty head?

I am almost afraid to consider what I have advanced. My praises of things as they are, seem indeed too unqualified to be true. I feel like De Lolme, who knew comparatively little of the beauties of the English Constitution before they unfolded themselves in the course of his work. The training I have described is a fair picture of an early stage in our Church system. This training has improved, is improving, and will yet more improve.

The improvement to be expected must depend not on better measures, but better MOTHERS. Wiser mothers must people our schools, and our schools our colleges, with better youths. The mothers of England supply the material on which all pastors and masters have to work. We are often told, the clergy are not exclusively the Church. Would that the laity would urge this doctrine further still, and admit that the clergy are not only *from* them, but *of* them, deriving all their infirmities from the same temptations. Then, they who complain of the imperfections of flesh and blood in the ministry, would see that the real question is, not whether the clergy of England are as passionless as all good men would desire; but whether, as compared with the laity from whom they are selected, their superiority as a body is not as decided as the most sanguine could possibly expect.

CHAPTER II.

THE COLLEGE FRIENDS — OXFORD PARTIES — A PARSON'S LIFE, IN IDEA AND IN REALITY — THE LONDON CURATE — CITY ARABS.

I PASSED my final examination, and took my B.A. degree, early in the month of June, 18—. No one but a graduate, in the first flutter of his ample gown, can tell how great was the relief. Mercifully delivered from a four-years' incubus, I felt like a young Master Atlas, with the world just dropped off his shoulders. Brereton of Merton, and I, had read together some six hours out of every day, allowing a half-hour's interval for a hasty dinner, during the whole of the last month; so, when once clear of the Schools, we were inseparables — *strenua exercet inertia* — doing nothing with all our might and main. It was by that time allowable to unbend. We could then be idle with a clear conscience; or, as Brereton said, "out of principle;" an expression which generally means, because men like it. Oh! how we lounged in each other's easy chairs those sunny mornings, and then sauntered to the boats, and floated—just paddling—down the Cherwell. We once declared we would try to catch some chub, quite out of sympathy, because chub are the laziest fish in existence; and, one day, we lay for a while in the deep grass while he backed one fleecy cloud for sixpence, and I another, to complete a supposed piece of aërial scene-shifting first. However, idleness continued ceases to be rest: and we soon exclaimed that our ἐνέργειαι wanted a τέλος, by which terms Aristotle implied that the way of the world is like seeing the pictures at Blenheim. Nature, like the old housekeeper, whispers, "Keep moving, gentlemen; keep moving;" and, almost before we have digested one object in the Great Exhibition of this world, man must pass on to something else. So we soon began again to read, to talk, and to discuss. I cannot certainly remember all we talked of, but a few observations by Brereton, spoken at the time when the Oxford Tract party was

first formed, has always appeared to me to have so much truth in it, that I venture to give the following sketch of our youthful dialogue:—

Austin. "Let me ask, Brereton, what do you think of this Tract party? Only consider the style of men who are running after this new crotchet; not merely men of a Pharisaic sort of piety, but think of the set of Beresford, and Ayton, ay, and Glover of Oriel, too—all heart and hand in the cause."

Brereton. "Why, I'll tell you what I have been thinking; you remember what we once agreed about, 'The Signs of the Times,' when talking over the life of John Wesley?"

Austin. "True. We were a little philosophical and comprehensive in our views just then; and I remember this observation especially, that there was a daily increasing number of rising men, who, yearning for a more genial sphere for their religious feelings, were only kept down by certain incidents of Methodism that jarred upon their tastes, and you said these very words, which really seem prophetic: 'Depend upon it, Austin, if some one were to originate a sect of Genteel Dissenters, it would spread from the Land's End to John o' Groats in a very short time.'"

Brereton. "But you do not mean to say that the restoration of ancient discipline, and all the other '*notes*' of this party, are a sham?'"

Austin. "Neither do I mean to say that in the days of Lord George Gordon's row, all zeal for Protestantism was a sham; but I do mean, that not one in a hundred of that deluded mob at all understood what he was shouting for. No. This is true of all great parties. There is a reality as a nucleus, but by far the greater and the noisier part are but as leaves and husk. As to understanding and acting from conviction of the truth of their opinions, why, there's Hemsworth, and a dozen like him, who made sad work of the Thirty-nine Articles in the schools, but still are they so positive about the history of the Church, that Winton, coolly taking his cigar out of his mouth, said, as one unanswerable argument to a whole long Anglo-Catholic theory, hot from the Common Room of Oriel,—'Come, this is too good a joke, my dear fellow; the stream of your history theological, to my certain knowledge, runs no deeper than one of Vincent's Cram books!' That is true enough, and true of all great parties, whether in Church or State. Consider the case of the Roman Catholic question, or the Reform Bill, and their respective parties; how few could vindicate their opinions by sound argument! No, the social waters were surging and swelling; men amused themselves, as it

were, by wrangling on the beach, while the resistless tide was driving in billow after billow, till it swept them, arguments and all, clear away."

Brereton. "And you believe there is the same resistless power in operation now?"

Austin. "No doubt of it. An efficient cause is one thing—a formal cause—or a mere occasion, is another. The Oriel men have framed the mill, but is any man so foolish as not to see that their subtle disquisitions are of small account, indeed, compared with the daily increasing motive power?"

Brereton. "You mean, that the Oriel crotchets are as the mill, and the growing piety and seriousness we observe in Oxford men is the real stream to turn it. But, shall we say any other mill would do as well—any other *ism?*"

Austin. "No. Your machinery must always bear some relation to the power that moves it. This stream would not turn a Low-Church mill, nor an ungenteel mill. These men feel order and discipline an attraction. Besides, how charming must it be to find so good a use for all the Greek and Latin they have been acquiring—to have something in unison with all their tastes and habits—the growth of sixteen terms amidst the ancient associations of our grey, time-honoured towers!"

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These were free and happy hours, "the feast of reason and the flow of soul," that I spent with old Brereton. Yes, *old;* because we had grown up from boyhood together—*old,* because our friendship seemed of mature and solid growth. It was not that we were in tastes so much alike; rather that his mind was the complement of mine, and mine of his. We never jarred on each other's feelings. Each could meet an idea half way, and carry on a kind of short-hand conversation. He once said to me, "You are the flint to my steel—the spark flies out between us. I like a man to obstetricise my ideas, not to strangle them in their birth."

Still, though we felt so well suited to live together, to be nearest neighbours, and to fraternise, as "Cheerible brothers" throughout life; yet, in a few days, Commemoration had, as usual, emptied the cricket-grounds and the boat-houses into Blenheim Park or the pic-nic retreats of Newnham, and term was over. It had been duly honoured with college breakfasts and luncheons, when all the college gardens are gay, and all hearts are fluttering with those indescribable sensations which ladies, and even the very mention of them, ever will scatter among "tinder-hearted" men: but now all had passed away. My friend's home was in

Guernsey, and mine in L——; so our separation placed us wide as the poles asunder. This is an impressive feature in all college friendships; that two congenial spirits are brought from north and south, to live together till blended into one, and then inexorably torn away like Siberian exiles, to look on past pleasures as a dream.

But Oxford serves like a great railway station, to give us short glimpses of each other in the journey of life, with just as little prospect of our travelling far together, however fond of each other's company. Brereton and I never met for nine long years; when, on one muddy, sloppy day, I met him in London, with a wife, two boys, a wet umbrella, and far more "shopping" in his hands than he ever thought to carry. He glanced at me helplessly, and said,—

"'Quantum mutatus ab illo.'

What an altered man am I from that Brereton of Merton, who once, with Thucydides and Aristotle, chops and pancakes, tried the digestion, both of mind and body, as you remember, in Randall's lodgings! Come and see me and recall old times to-morrow, and let us have one talk more before I die."

Next day I went to visit him, scarcely a stone's throw from the Surrey end of London Bridge.

"Ah!" said he, "how little do men know of the life that is before them when they enter the Church! Red-coats and ball-rooms act with gentlemen like the drum and the ribbons with the chaw-bacons, to tempt thoughtless young fellows into the army. A comfortable parsonage on week-days, and a rapidly improving congregation on Sundays, is the vision which draws many a man, equally under a delusion, into the Church. Now look at me. My house is below the level of the Thames; the streets are reeking with malaria; those geraniums look pale and dowdy, and my wife and children much the same. My wife and her flowers were both natives of the same clear atmosphere, and each sympathises in the other's change. Poor Sally! you know you always suspected there was an attraction in the latitude of Henley, and now you have seen the lady herself. She, poor thing, pictured to herself, as a parson's wife, a model parish, with every cottage all honeysuckles and beehives, and the neatest mobcaps and cleanest aprons curtseying as the lady of the vicarage passed up and down some pretty lane; and here she cannot move for carts and drays that block up the streets, and the squalid stream from the gin-palace and the alleys. Why, they stare at her as the creation of some

purer sphere! Few, indeed, are the objects her charity can relieve; the dens of misery are too repulsive."

"But do you make any sensible progress in such a parish?"

"As to progress, the Almighty only knows how long His own good seeds are ordained to lie before they show the tender blade; but, as to sensible progress, there is little indeed. You remember we used to talk at college of doctrines and style of preaching, of Paul or of Apollos, of Melvill or of Chalmers. So, young soldiers think of military tactics on the field of battle as if it were all like a game of chess: when, after all, it is the regularity of the supplies and the excellence of the commissariat that give effect to all the rest. So it is in my parish. We want the bread that perisheth as a means to the bread of life. Our Saviour wrought the miracles of the loaves *after* preaching to the thousands; but here, we want such a miracle first. Our Lord could on one occasion do no miracle 'because of their unbelief:' we can do little because of their hungry inattention, tracing your hand to your breeches pocket. If a man were made of broken victuals and old clothes, if he were fountains of caudle and rivers of soup, as Juvenal says, '*epotaque flumina Medo*,' I believe the poor souls would drink him dry.

"Are there many Dissenters in your parish?" I inquired.

"Dissenters! Would there were!" said Brereton, emphatically. "But you must not misunderstand me; though I could almost wish we had every *ism* under the sun. No *ism* is half as bad as Heathenism. Here we have worse than that; we have Atheism!—not merely an ignorance, but a negation of God! My experience no doubt coincides with yours, and I know my views used to be much the same; but, old notions of orthodox practices and the dignity of the Church-of-England clergy, are put to a hard strain in an overgrown city parish—though parish it is not, the parochial system has little application. It is a wilderness of houses, and the Surrey side of London Bridge wants the same sort of Mission as the interior of Africa or Chinese Tartary. It used to be very Low Church to recognise the City Mission; very Low Church to have a feeling soul in the pulpit; still more Low Church to preach in a cottage, and No Church at all to be seen with twenty men without coats, and as many women without bonnets, gathered round you to hear words, hot from the heart, at the further end of a blind alley. You should see some of the Puseyites, as people call them."

"What, are they not High Church enough?"

"Yes, in theory; but nature is too strong for them. Truth

is too strong when brought to the test of action and effect. They may be blind as kittens for nine days or so, but they cannot help opening their eyes when once they come here. Wilson of Oriel is here, and a brother of Kirkham of University. These two men have, indeed, most enviable working qualities; and, instead of that kind of fasting and self-denial which used to consist in eating eggs and keeping out of the Common Room, one of them almost limits himself to boiled meat, that he may give the broth to the sick poor; and the way they persevere in reading and praying amidst our crowded garrets is really a mercy for a man who lacks enthusiasm, like me, to witness. I do declare to you, that the example of Wilson and Kirkham has often stimulated me to visit one or two poor souls more, when I thought I had done enough for the day and was going home!"

"And the difference of your doctrine and theirs you think is quite a vanishing quantity?"

"It makes as little difference with our present 'pupils' as the difference between the Aristotelian and Platonic theories. Were you here, you would say there was a distinction between us without a difference. I often tell them that they are 'Oxford Tract,' the part of tract having worn out by rubbing against human nature. If they would only learn to Protestantise their collars, and to un-Romanise their coats, they would obviate a world of prejudice. Every man can distinguish your coat, though very few can distinguish your doctrines; just as the vulgar know a Jew, never by his tenets, but always by his beard."

He continued after a while:—

"But, really, dress is something: a distinguishing costume does show them wise in their generation, however foolish to copy the garb of Rome. Dress marks a party, and a party is no slight means of gathering and of multiplying strength. A party forms a standard to rally round; and more than that, it adds a powerful secondary motive and a useful stimulus to counteract the leaden apathy of man, and to quicken 'the body of this death,' with which we are doomed to struggle on! The soldiers of the cross, like other soldiers, warm with each other's fire, when they would not single-handed rush into the breach. If men were all soul and no body—if we were each a pure abstraction, without savouring in the least of that grosser nature which, says Lucretius, '*Mortales hebetat visus*'—dulls the edge of our mortal vision—why then, the mind might possibly energise without a party, and without any of those stepping-stones by which we pass and mark our progress from one stage to another; but, constituted as we frail mortals are,

we do find in a party a degree of comfort and encouragement which it is not wise to decry. Every day we see more and more of the truth of what we predicted years ago.

"We said that the Puseyism would wear off and the piety would remain. What we said of the genteel *ism* is also true. Genuine religion used to involve a kind of martyrdom, more dreaded by some persons than fire and sword; namely, a loss of caste in society and a necessity of sympathising with an inferior order of people. I cannot at this moment think, without impatience, of the ill-bred habits and intrusiveness which used to annoy me in associating with a certain religious party some years since; but now, persons of taste and refinement form a religious circle of their own: that piety which has come in as a flood, will not be pure at first, and very likely it will overflow its banks, and destroy ancient landmarks; but still, whether the High-Church ladies of Belgravia work monograms, or the Low-Church ladies of Clapham crochet slippers, the tendency to forget the spiritual end in the temporal means, and to worship the creature instead of the Creator, is much the same. Still, we must never forget that the encouragement to formality so easy to draw from the Tractarian system is very dangerous. However, one great result of this movement is, that the wealth and influence of the most powerful party in London is gradually drawn to Ragged Schools, and Model Lodging-houses, and active Christian charity,—and this is no slight counterpoise to Tractarian errors.

"It seems wise and reasonable to consider that every party which succeeds, succeeds by virtue of something founded in truth and human nature. 'There's a soul of goodness' even in 'things evil,' and it is our duty to 'distil it out.' I confess it was from Kirkham and Wilson that I first learnt the art of self-multiplication,—to set men of all classes to work with us and for us.

"But the secret of that power over others consists not in talking but in doing. It is our own personal energy which inspires. It consists not in 'go,' but 'come.' It has nothing to do with making a comfortable tea-party, with a week's invitation, to consider the propriety of taking measures to form a committee to perform diurnal revolutions on their own axis, and do nothing after all. But Kirkham stops for no preliminary formalities whatever,—on he goes, waits for no one, but does his own duty vigorously. It is not his fault, he says, that there is work for nineteen others. No; there is all the more reason that he should do his twentieth part the better.

"The consequence is, many are fired by his enthusiasm and

follow in his train. One week a grocer's apprentice offers to work an hour; another week adds a tailor or a saddler, and they ere long are joined by others—a wife, sister, or a friend—till Kirkham realises the old poetic wish of a hundred hands and a hundred tongues, all ministering to necessities, and teaching the ignorant at the same time."

"But do you find the Tractarians universally men of this character?"

"Far indeed from universally. Wolves in sheep's clothing will, to the end of time, follow with the honest and sincere, and play Judas to every sect. If the Low-Church party is occasionally disgraced with mere adventurers and fortune-hunters, the Tractarian garb and monumental apathy are also caricatured by a class of men who, but for a family living, would never have been ordained at all.

"I could mention a man who, with chants, and introits, and decorations, has made himself more notorious, and done more to depreciate the Church of England in the eyes of all sober-minded men, than any pervert at the present day; yet that man has so little of the real spirit of his party, that he is known as a fashionable *bon vivant*, and actually joins parties in Lent. Indeed, as far as I have observed, no party is more likely than the Tractarian to be compromised by men who take the name rather as a matter of taste than of piety, and as a mere cloak for their ignorance, or food for their vanity. I have learnt lately to be careful how I judge of men by the names of their party.

"At one time, whoever was simply in earnest was called Low Church, or Evangelical; and now, any man who is an honest Churchman is likely to be called Tractarian. Give me a man with his heart in the cause, and with that strong and stirring faith within him, which will alone support him day after day in our crowded lodging-houses, and he is the Churchman for me. In so saying, I am not indifferent to doctrines. I only mean, that where you meet a man heart and soul in the Gospel tidings amidst the wilds of Arabia—and no small part of England is dark—orthodox practice takes precedence of orthodox opinions.

"Orthodox practice?"

"Yes, orthodox practice is the word. A good minister is a living epistle—a walking sermon, read and marked by all men, neither can he preach with his lips more emphatically than by his life. Remember the Ordination vow. Old Dr. Edwards, who christened me, catechised me for confirmation, and gave me my *Si quis* and testimonials for Holy Orders, uttered these memorable

words, which I never shall forget:—'Remember, my very dear young friend, there is no place Satan is more actively at work than in the ministry. Envy and detraction are his weapons. Half you hear about this clergyman's views and the other's—half the pretended zeal about errors Calvinistic, Evangelical, and Tractarian—of doctrines, of faith without works, and works without faith, is idleness, envy, malice, and all uncharitableness, and nothing else.'

"'Take my advice—judge your brethren not by their supposed opinions, but by their manifest energy and industry, and the Christian purity and rectitude of their lives and conversations. Here is your Ordination vow; frame it, and put it up in your study, or let it stare you in the face (as mine does) when you wake in the morning. Let this be to you as the handwriting on the wall, and 'graven as with a pen of iron on a rock for ever;'' and then he pronounced, with much feeling and unction, that powerful exhortation of the Bishop: 'If it shall happen that the Church, or any member thereof, take any hurt or hindrance through your negligence, ye know the greatness of the fault and the horrible punishment that will ensue.' Now, what I call orthodox practice is acting up to this vow; and believe me, that Aristotle's dictum, that moral practice teaches moral science, or, in other words, that 'if any man will do His will he shall know of His doctrine,'—that this is proved again and again in a good pastor's life; for God's Word is as naturally adapted to man's heart as the sun's rays to the human eye. And when in a parish there is no one to make us cling to our fallacies by vexatious argument and opposition, nature and truth usurp their might and majesty, and so by experience errors wear away; albeit, the poor minister is still called Calvinistic or Tractarian, though nothing but pure and fervent piety remains."

The topic with Brereton now changed, and I adverted to the misery and poverty of the great metropolis, with which he had to contend on the Surrey side of the river, and he replied thoughtfully:—

"A dead-house is very much wanted among our people. This is one of the most urgent wants we have."

"A dead-house! What, are you chaplain to the hospital?"

"No, no; but we want a dead-house to relieve any family living all in one room, as much as we want one to relieve the patients in an hospital ward. Why, what is the poor family to do for a week when one dies, and lies unburied, perhaps a week, in the month of August?"

This was indeed a new difficulty to me, so I said, "Living all in one room!—the case never occurred to me."

"Never occurred! It is frequent here, and a horrible violation of all proper feeling and decency results. An old French officer once told me that, after the battle of Haynau, he saw four soldiers in a cart playing at cards, and the dead body of a comrade who had died on the journey—so blunted were their feelings by familiarity with death and misery—formed the card-table! If we only follow out the probable accidents and emergencies of several days with a corpse in one room with the family, you will easily realise the possibility of what I once witnessed—some little children playing 'bo-peep' behind their mother's coffin!"

"Horrible!" I exclaimed.

"Horrible! yes; but true, too true. The scenes our City Mission have brought to light would surpass all fiction. What Mr. Melvill mentioned in a charity sermon is the most pregnant fact I ever heard. A poor man, who had seen better days—once a surgeon—was found in such extremity of want that he had torn a piece off his last shirt to dress his blister!"

After a while he continued,—

"We have now a new term, that recognises emphatically an evil too long ignored. I mean, 'The City Arabs.' This is one step towards realising the truth that a veritable heathen mission is as much wanted in the interior of London as in the interior of Africa. As to heathen ignorance, in London we have a darkness that may be felt—as to the gross and debasing habits of the brutes that perish, we have hovels and savages not surpassed in Timbuctoo—and as to poisonous malaria, I can show you veritable patches of Sierra Leone no further off than Spitalfields—and, as to hunger and thirst, I can say with Smollett, that a man without money may starve in Leadenhall Market as well as in the wilds of Arabia; while pure water is, to the weak and sickly, as inaccessible in some parts of London as in the sandy desert.

"Now, amidst all these evils, so exhausting to the body, so narcotic to the mind, and so debasing to the soul, sin becomes a physical necessity—a moral leprosy, beyond any ordinary human strength to resist. You must feed, and cleanse, and purify, and raise the poor creature from the condition of the swine before you can appeal to the feelings of the man. How can I teach or preach with effect to a dozen persons of different ages and sexes, amidst the festering filth of one small room—all too degraded and reckless with misery to care what happens to them in body or in soul? It is for this reason I hail the movement for model

lodging-houses and sanitary reform. This reform is indispensable for the Gospel, because it is the same thing as opening their eyes to read, their ears to hear, and their minds to understand.

"If in this assertion I appear to take a low view of the Gospel and the power of the ministry, I reply, that if I err, I err with Hooker; for he says, in his own judicious way, that as to food and raiment, 'Destitution in these is such an impediment as suffereth not the mind of man to admit any other care.' And again, 'True it is that the kingdom of God must be the first thing in our purposes and desires. But, inasmuch as a righteous life presupposeth life—inasmuch as to live virtuously is impossible except we live; therefore, the first impediment, which naturally we endeavour to remove, is penury and want of things without which we cannot live.'"

"And such miseries you actually are liable to encounter in your city visiting?"

"Indeed I am. I see misery beyond the power of words, and death in divers forms. But, believe me, it is not death, it is not sickness, it is not want, it is not any natural visitation you could name, that I most dread to encounter. The natural visitations of Providence all involve some secret balm and drops of comfort: there is rest in the silent grave: our dearest relatives, we feel, can die but once: and I have heard the most affectionate of mourners, turning from the last long look upon the lowered coffin, say, 'Never mind—there is nothing there—I can bear it all, for that grave has no victory.' But worst of all to witness are scenes of shame and of remorse, for it so happened that I once relieved Watson as chaplain of —— gaol for three months, and never shall I forget the piercing cry of one pale and almost bloodless woman when Douglas, the cashier of a north-country bank, was sentenced to transportation. It had been a true love-match between them, and he, an affectionate husband, was weak and over-fond. The wife was careless and brought him into debt. His goods were threatened with execution, and he, to spare her feelings and his own character, falsified an entry to the extent of 100*l.*, the exact amount of his quarter's salary, which he intended only to anticipate by a month.—Ah! to fathom the lowest depths of misery, you must witness man's self-inflicted tortures in racking brain and aching heart, which I saw then.

"Come, my good fellow—time is short—more of this when we meet to-morrow. If ever you get me into Newgate with you—you always were fond of a hanging story—I shall not be let

out again in a hurry. But as to a really pathetic tale, remember that I tell you the story of that widow whose husband I buried."

"I will not forget to remind you. But I can tell you that, as to widows, I have learnt of late to hold my sympathies a little better in hand. There was our squire's wife at my first parish, who kept me in a painfully melting mood for a whole week, and after all, it turned out to be only what they call 'a happy release.' Literally, at the end of ten months, old Davy, our clerk, came to me one morning and said, 'Please, sir, you are wanted. Our lady is coming after a license.'

"'A license!' I replied, astonished: 'a certificate of her husband's death you mean.'

"'No, sir, I do not,' said Davy; 'tis a license. And 'tis the captain who came so regularly for the shooting in the squire's lifetime; and they won't wait no longer to please any one, says my lady's maid.'"

"Good bye, good bye!"

CHAPTER III.

I LEAVE COLLEGE—THE OXFORD COACHMAN—WAYSIDE WISDOM—AFFECTING STORY OF JOHNNY WALTERS—OFF MY FATHER'S HANDS.

In one of the old novels—beyond all doubt the model of *The Caxtons*—that delightful work which shows how very superior in tone and feeling an author in his maturity may rise to the same author in his youth—the hero of the tale says, "But, to return to my history, for—I forgot—all this time I am not *born*." So, I must say, to return to my history in the Ministry, for, I forgot, all this time I am not Ordained!—I left myself standing at the door of the Angel, opposite Queen's College, Oxford, Brereton having started south in a nine-o'clock coach, and I booked for the north about ten.

Few old Oxonians can look up the High Street without emotion, to take a last long look at the end of their career. We feel we have passed from youth to age. One chapter of life—oh, how full of meaning and of significance!—seems ended; and, for better or for worse, the book is closed. Then a new generation is treading upon our heels: we wonder how sanguine and visionary they appear—for we can see their present and their future at a glance—and wake from our reverie to identify ourselves, as we were but ten or twelve terms since. The same hive, but new swarms of busy bees, is the idea which to my mind a distant view of Oxford always presents. A railway refreshment-room, as at Swindon or Wolverhampton, leaves the same impression. One minute all is still and motionless—then pours in an eager crowd of excited guests—a few minutes pass in hurry and confusion, and then one and all are whirled away, and the building remains as still and silent as before. I had felt what it was to have practised for the great match of the cricket season, and to have had my innings, and seen that event come off,—I had felt what it was

to have trained for the boat-races, and seen the last heart-stirring struggle over. And now the one great contest that gave occasion to all these little strifes was past; my college race was run; my innings over—"our side out," and "the other side going in!"

Edwards, the coachman, with his whip in his hand and a pink in his button-hole, sauntered quietly up while the coach was being loaded, and said to me, as he put his finger to his hat, "It is time I knew your luggage, sir; I have seen it pretty often. You've passed the right side the post—eh, sir? Mr. Mackeson told me that good news. So I must congratulate you, sir." —"Ned," turning to the porter, "keep a box-seat for Mr. Austin. You deserve it this term—don't ye, sir?"

Coachmen are not so communicative at first start—thinking of the way-bill and the work before them, and sometimes from habit when they have no way-bill to think of; but, after a while, our usual conversation began:—

"They've been down upon some of them this examination, haven't they, sir? Mr. Flower, I fancy, has tried to shave the corner a little too fine ——"

"Why, who told you, Edwards?"

"All right, sir. No tales out o' school. You needn't be afraid of committing yourself—I knew it before ever I spoke to you, sir—honour bright!"

"It seems to me, Edwards, you pick up information very fast."

"That's because they tell o' themselves very often, sir; a bird just plucked, and tender-like and sensitive, is sure to squeak. I know the ways of them, sir, as well as any one. Not that I am ever curious; but, when a box-seat has a heavy conscience, and every stage brings him nearer and nearer to the old gentleman who has had to pay and pay year after year, and pay for nothing, and when the news has gone down the road before him, he's sure to split upon himself. A gentleman outside one day told a story out o' one of your College-books—I didn't think there had been half as much sense in those books—about a young woman who had made some unpleasant discovery or other about her young man's ears, and not having anybody to tell it to, she went and dug a hole in the garden and told it there. That's life, sir, that is. I call that human nature all over. A box-seat talking quietly—and no outsiders behind to overhear—him I can get anything out of, about College, by the time we change horses at the Hare and Hounds on the hill; or, if not then, wait till he has had one half-pint of the Swan's ale, hot with a little gin in it,

and the story will all come out as smooth as can be—That's the way I know things, Mr. Austin."

If a fine and perfect specimen of the genus coachman were to be mummified or preserved for the British Museum, before the railways made the race, dodo-like, extinct, Samuel Edwards of the Rocket should have been the man. He was a man of better family and education than usual in those days, though there were always a few broken-down gentlemen on the road. But when, as he said, "the money came to be divided at the old man's death, I had sense enough to see that my gentility, like myself, could not live on air; so I put my pride in the hind boot, and worked the first coach I could hear of."

He soon continued:—

"Well sir, your youngest brother's growing tall. So, I suppose he must be attended to now, and will begin to tread you out of the family nest to try to peck a little on your own account—I suppose now the old gentleman will expect you to set about something *profitable?*"

I confess that this off-hand view of me and my position did for the first time make me realise the fact that the hour had come to provide for myself—and really, in gaining a *testamur*, I felt at the moment a little disappointment, as if I had gained a loss, and were launched on the ocean of life a little more suddenly than I had before considered.

"Yes," he repeated, "you'll now be about something that's some good to somebody."

"Why, you seem to have a low opinion of four years at the University, Edwards? Is there no use in that?"

"I call that lying fallow—being out at grass; and, like horses out at grass, you are all the while eating your heads off. I often wonder the governors are not more in a hurry for some return for their outlay. But I am aware that with professions you cannot begin very young. So in this way we must allow six-year-old colts. Parsons are made full young as it is: as to lawyers and doctors, the customers take care of that. Clients and patients will not trust practitioners till they are something more than boys."

"Then you think we are learning nothing to qualify us for parsons, all this time?"

"Why, if things are to go in at one ear and out at the other, which you know is the way with a pretty many of you, it can't much matter what sort that learning is. But you do learn something besides mischief, I honestly confess to you, up at Oxford.

For, you don't think, sir, that I have taken up coach-loads of boys and brought back the same raw commodity I may say manufactured—that is, that I have booked the same coach-loads three years after as men, and made no observations all the time—going on three-and-twenty years come Michaelmas ?"

"Now for your observations, Edwards."

"I was going to say, that you go up as fresh and fanciful as if you thought the moon were made of green cheese; you drop all the conceit and childishness when you're there, and come back sensible. There are no gentlemen I travel with like you Oxford gentlemen, towards the end of your time, to fall in with men and things as they are."

"You mean to say, we have been taught to know ourselves; neither timid in what we can do, nor aspiring to what we cannot, but fitting smoothly like cogs in the big wheel of society ?"

"That is just my meaning, sir; well put, indeed: some men are like oil to that wheel of society—some just like grit. You College gentlemen are like the oil; you work glib, smooth, and easy: you seldom talk against the grain, or make a man feel uncomfortable. One in a dozen of you is, perhaps, a scholar into the bargain; but you, nearly all of you, learn, as I say, to behave yourselves. Poor Mr. Glover—plucked or not—and really I pitied him—he would pass in common sense any how. I 'examine' them, sir, after my fashion, regularly, sir, I can tell you."

"Then you must know, Edwards, I am intended for the Church, and I am glad to find you have hit upon one more branch of useful knowledge than the world gives Oxford credit for."

"Well, sir, but how long will it be before I am to have the pleasure of sitting under you ?"

"Two years must pass away first."

"Now, I should just like to know, sir, what you are going to do with yourself these two years ?"

"In other words, you have formed an opinion on that point also ?"

"I have, sir; for I carry a good many Methodies, Baptists, Bible Christians, and some of all sorts, up and down the road."

"And you 'examine' them, too ?"

"Right again, sir. I do have a good deal of talk and argument with them, and there's one story they all agree in, which is, if the clergy would only talk plain English from the pulpits, and speak from the heart, the Dissenters might almost close their chapels. Now, sir, you'll allow there are two sorts of English: one

that is spoken in drawing-rooms, the other spoken in cottages; the one is a conversational language, the other bookish; the one is like talking to a man, the other like preaching to him; the one is sound, the other sense.—The Dissenters use the one, your clergy the other; nine sermons out of ten, as far as the poor man is concerned, might just as well be Greek."

"But you would not have us preach in such a coarse and vulgar manner as the Dissenters?"

"No, sir; I say, copy what's good, not what's bad, in them. They can command attention when they preach, and you Church clergy can't. Suppose I made up my conversation before I started, who'd listen to me? As it is, I have a certain quantity stowed away in my head, and it comes out when and where it's wanted. That's like the Dissenters. A doctor on our coach once said smartly enough that a Church-of-England sermon ought to be like a separate prescription; but instead of that it is more like a box of family pills, a kind of general prescription for all constitutions and all complaints: and, worse than that, it is very often about the very last thing in the world to do poor and plain folk any good."

"Then you think our topics ill chosen, and our language not the King's English?"

"King's English, indeed! Nothing like it. Why, if I were to talk such English to our horse-keepers and 'pike-men, I should never get along the King's highway. There isn't one trade or calling that could be carried on with pulpit English. It won't work week-days, so why try it Sundays? Your sentences are twice as long as a sensible man ever forms his mouth to. Don't tell me about a style coarse or vulgar. Read John Bunyan. Isn't his style genteel enough for you? Yes, that help's me to explain myself; preach John Bunyan's English, and let it, like that wonderful book of his, be about something. Not 'moral influences,' not 'relative obligations;' that's all for the head: we want something to the heart. A hawker said the other day, 'People won't buy a tract that has not a tale in it.'"

There was deep wisdom in all this. Of course Edwards meant, choose that pure Saxon, those familiar household words, which speak so feelingly; and prefer the concrete, or illustrative, to the abstract or the philosophical. But, years passed away before I fully realised the truth of his homely counsel. Edwards would have reminded me of the words so little understood, "Without a parable spake He not unto them." Our Great Teacher never taught without an illustration; how rarely do we teach with one!

For, the parable is only the Oriental form of the concrete or the illustrative style. The life of William Jay, late of Bath, contains valuable hints to any young clergyman who would apply our Saviour's method of teaching by parable to the habits of the present day.

"But," continued Edwards, "I have an observation to make on one point more. You College gentlemen, as you sit beside me on this coach, can choose such subjects and conversation as is interesting to a man, and such as suits his mood and temper. Some of those half-bred people I take up on the road have not the sense and feeling to do this. For instance, some will begin to threaten me with railways, and talk of coaches being driven off the road; just as if, true or not, news like this would make me in the best of humours. You gentlemen never cross the grain like that, and this shows me that you have some common sense and tact in you: that you can suit your conversation to your company, and that your heart beats true to your neighbour's heart.

"This is what I meant by saying you had learnt to behave yourselves; and why can't you study your parishioners' minds and feelings in the same way? Out of all the interesting and all the plain texts and stories in the Bible, why should you choose matters which are no more suited to your hearers than to the man in the moon, if there is such a gentleman? Suppose, in our coaching business, our governor has any plain message to give me, he does it by word of mouth; but if he has any matter of accounts, or anything a man can't catch at once telling, he says, 'Here 'tis written down, you can make out all this when quiet of an evening.' But there isn't one parson in a hundred who has the sense to act so.

"Yet, see how necessary this is in teaching Scripture. Some texts are plain of themselves, good truths and useful; some texts are plain with a word of explanation; some texts nothing will make plain but reading and study. Now it's this last kind you generally make sermons about. All this comes, as Sam Slick says, 'from not studying human natur.' The Dissenter can see this, but you can't. The reason is, the Dissenter gets his bread by it. If he loses his passengers, his coach must stop; so Mr. Methody begins to consider what will keep his connexion a little together. This is for all the world like free trade: the demand regulates the supply. I know you'll say, this causes flattery, and doctrine rather pleasant than wholesome. I allow for all this; but, without denying the rant, and the ignorance, and all the false trickery of some who take up Sunday-preaching to help their week-day

trade, there is much indeed that the Church clergy, if they will but condescend, may learn from the Dissenters."

"Then, Edwards, you agree with me that the Dissenter has often an eye to his trade?"

"Why, as to that, sir, they must make it pay somehow; for they," he said, with a sly look at me, "are very short of what we call family livings."

I could not help smiling at that retort, and after a while he continued,—

"Talking of texts, sir, the text, if properly chosen, is the best part of the sermon for the poor. The poor man's religious knowledge is made up of texts. If he learns but one text a Sunday, say fifty a-year—talked of in the churchyard, and running in his head all the week—what a blessing it must be to him! Like the little leaven and the grain of mustard-seed, it spreads fast, and takes deep root within him.—I remember hearing of a common soldier who once, for a wonder, went to church, and heard, 'There is no rest for the wicked, saith the Lord.' This man led an evil life, and had a very rough time of it, and with every fresh trouble, this same voice and the same words, 'There is no rest for the wicked, saith the Lord,' rang in his ears; and led to his reformation.

"Now, just suppose that this poor ignorant fellow had heard our text last Sunday, which was something about the Hivites and Jebusites in the morning, or the one the Sunday morning before, about something in the Valley of Jehoshaphat; I leave you to judge, sir, how much *leavening* there is in such texts as these.—Add to this, with simple country folk, you have so much the character of preaching things too fine for them, and fit only for the squire's pew, that no sooner has John heard the text, than he makes himself up quite comfortable in the corner of his seat, and wears a look as much as to say, 'Now I'm ready for half an hour of it,' and as if it were a virtue to put up with it—for he hasn't a notion of listening—till he's let out of church.—So, mind you always think of the poor soldier, or of Chawbacon John, when you choose your text or make your sermon."

Much more passed between us before the end of the journey. There is a great deal of wisdom in this world to be learnt without the aid of books; and a stage-coachman with a well-formed mind—and such men we all have known in the old coach days—is in no bad situation for hearing, comparing, and drawing just conclusions.

Samuel Edwards was a man who read, and was fond of quoting

aptly, and very wittily sometimes. One day, when there was a stoppage of carts and carriages, and several drivers were disputing, with low language, who should move first, Edwards cried out, in striking contrast, "Stand not on the order of your going, but go at once."

After a time he continued, "You said, I think, sir, that you had two years to study for the Church——"

"But I'm afraid you can hardly help me much in that direction."

"I don't know that, sir. Perhaps I could direct your studies a little better than you would think: but of course, not as to learning. You must have plenty of that already, perhaps too much—like the raw recruit's sword, always too long for him, getting between his legs and tripping him up. No: I can tell you nothing about your learning, except to take care and keep it out of sight; but, if I could have my way, and put on the wishing cap, what do you think I would give you—I mean, for the next two years' work? Why, I would give you—these are not my words, you will understand, but the words of a very longheaded man that travels this road with me—I'd give you:

"1. Your mother tongue to learn;

"2. A poor man's heart to anatomise; and,

"3. A poor man's brain to dissect.

"Ah! sir; you may despise the Dissenters if you like; but they are, in one way, your very best friends. Without them, it would have been downright stagnation in the Church a long time ago. They keep you a little to your work: they've already made you march a pretty deal faster than the 'regulation step.' They are very vexatious, I dare say—an opposition team always is—emptying your coach into theirs. Now, I'm not over and above fond of these Dissenters, though there are good as well as bad in every party; but what I dislike is, that they carry such a face with them—no more their own face than if it took on and off, which oftentimes I think it does: but, for all that, my firm belief is—to speak a solemn thing in a plain way—that you Churchmen will none of you travel to your great journey's end more slowly because they carry on a lively opposition on the same road!"

Such were the materials for much after-thought with which some forty miles of space and some six hours of time passed away.

On reaching home, I need hardly say that there was no little conversation for the first day or two about my late examination. "How I passed?" "Whether I was nervous?" and "How many

were plucked?" I remember relating to my mother, who listened with painful interest and excitement, the unhappy case of a married man, whose wife was keeping terms with him in lodgings in St. John's Street. He had been, and indeed still was, a very wild young man, and while living in country quarters under sentence of rustication for two years, a severe sentence, but intended, probably, to give his naughty companions time to disperse—for, every wild young man (of course) would be innocence itself were it not for some one else so cruel as to mislead him—he had married for love, and was as much embarrassed as others ever have been and ever will be who shut their eyes to the fact that matrimony is a "matter-of-money" after all. I used to be invited to take tea with him, ostensibly to hear the lady sing, but much more commonly to hear a puling little infant squall; for, the walls were thin and the floor sonorous (in what lodgings are they not?). My once merry-hearted friend had begun to be steadied by this burthen on his back, and the large establishment around him; for, the said establishment consisted not only of a wife, a baby, and a nurse, but he had also to give a daily audience to impatient tradesmen, being afflicted with duns innumerable.

Poor fellow! He said, "Duns are a mere nothing to a single man: for, with a good joke about my ship in the Downs, and a glass of black strap, I could send them on quite comfortable; but now they stick like leeches. It is the sight of that fat nurse and baby and pap-apparatus eating me up, which is at the bottom of it all. Then, my wife does take on so: she never saw a dun in her life before she married me. It is time she was used to them; but instead of that she grows worse and worse. I said, 'Now, Mary, they can't take the child in execution; so nothing very bad can happen.' Still, for all I can do or say, the duns worry her, and then she worries me, and when I go to lecture I'm as stupid and absent as an owl."

"And didn't he pass?" asked my mother anxiously.

"You shall hear, mother. Every time I went, the interesting lady used to look up at me imploringly, if he left the room, when I had been 'coaching' her Johnny in his logic, and would say: "Well, Mr. Austin, this is kind of you; any spare evening I shall be *so* happy to see you in this quiet way. But does Johnny improve? Will he pass?'

"Of course I always answered with a saving clause; full of hopes that all would be well. But one evening she came round me very ingeniously, and said, 'Mr. Austin, of which do you think Johnny knows most—of his Logic, or—of his Divinity?'

"Not suspecting the drift of her question, I replied, 'I think I may say that he decidedly knows most of his Divin——' I felt the cat had head and fore-paws out of the bag, and tried to draw back, but couldn't. A long-drawn sigh told me what I had disclosed, for the lady was herself 'coaching' Johnny in his Divinity; and, keeping her mind's eye fixed on the most promising of her late charity-school class as the lowest standard she could imagine of academical proficiency, she felt that his chance must be small indeed; for she declared that in any fair examination, as he once expressed it, 'her Polly Dodds could beat his head off.'"

"But did he pass?" asked my mother, urgently.

"It were to be hoped he would, mother: for, the living in expectancy would be much jeopardised by any delay in his being ordained. So, as I was saying, we all did our best; the lady filling up spare corners with the Divinity, I subsidising with the Logic, and the private tutor cramming all things in ordinary. As the day for the examination or the opening of the schools drew nigh, the wife's anxiety became extreme, and exhibited itself in such admonitions and such fidgeting of her Johnny as was by no means favourable to mature digestion of sorites, syllogisms, or enthymems. 'I tell ye what, Mr. Austin,' said the nurse one day, 'it's high time as master was passed, or plucked out of the way, or summat; for it do keep up such a worriting of missus that this poor innocent little babe is pretty nigh starved.'"

"The woman showed her sense," said my mother, in a high state of maternal excitement; "but tell me, did the silly young man pass?" repeated my mother impatiently.

"Well, I was saying, mother, the day came for putting down his name at the Proctor's for examination; then his name was low down on the list, and his turn didn't come till the ninth day: I did all I could to cram him, and to quiet Mrs. Walters. His paper work came on first—'Did you answer all the questions?' inquired Mrs. Walters eagerly. Of course he said, 'Not all—no man is expected to answer them all.'—This seemed evasive, and only made the fond wife's anxieties the more intense.

"At last came his *viva voce* examination, and in the evening of that day his fate was to be decided. You should have seen Mrs. Walters that morning, mother. I breakfasted with them; she had smoothed and ironed the customary bands and white tie, she put some brandy in her husband's tea, she entreated him to keep himself perfectly composed, though she kept fidgeting him all the time, and indeed, she did everything she possibly could think of to give him the shadow of a ghost of a chance more than he had

before; and the poor wife did seem as if she were herself on a trial of life and death."

"But I must know, Harry; tell me the end at once: has he got through?"

"No, mother; no. I think you might have guessed that."

"Shameful! But did the examiners know he was a married man?—I am sure I would have written and told them, had I been his wife. Yes, and I would not have been too particular to say that I had a baby, either, and so touch their feelings if they had any."

"Oh, yes, mother, they generally find out these critical positions."

"And how did he bear his fate?"

"Why, I went to wait for his *testamur* at the door of the schools in the corner of the quadrangle, and he walked about in a fever of excitement up and down by the Bodleian. Well, out came Purdue, the clerk of the schools, and said, 'Seven *testamurs* out of eight—all safe but Mr. Walters.'"

"The blow would have made me sink into the earth," said my mother. "And did you run and tell him?"

"No, mother, I ran the other way. I couldn't tell him; I wrote a note, and all that kind of thing. But I can't tell you any more, for it makes me miserable."

"I should think so, indeed! But what is he going to do? Where is he gone? Has the poor wife any friends?"

"Why, he left by the Monarch—with Mrs. Walters, baby, and nurse—to read with Hotham, of Queen's, all the long vacation. Mrs. Walters saw me by the coach-office: she squeezed my hand, and looked up at me with tears in her eyes, but couldn't speak. Not so the nurse. 'I know'd how it would be, Mr. Austin,' she said, with a knowing look; 'and so must you have known—didn't you, now?—before ever the *w*erdict. Master never looked to me at all a likely sort to pass nothing; but then there's an end of it—now he's plucked out of his misery, that is one blessing.' And then she added, in what was intended for a whisper, 'Missus was forced to wean the baby!'"

Next term, I am happy to say, he passed; but whether, after all, Polly Dodds could not have "beaten his head off," as his wife opined, in any fair divinity examination, I very much doubt. Cramming is not very favourable to a healthy digestion, either of mind or body. However, as I met this interesting party again in the course of my adventures, we will here take leave of them for the present.

In a few days all the excitement about my having ended my University education, and taken my degree, had passed away. The coachman's views of my position seemed true to human nature; for, instead of that season of enjoyment which we are so apt to promise ourselves whenever we have turned one of the anxious corners on the road of this life, I felt a new influence, a new motive power at work; I felt that a certain general expectation, and taking-it-as-a-matter-of-course in the minds of every body—that all this thrust me onwards and denied me rest. I could not as much as go to a tea-party, but numberless little impertinences and suggestive inquiries reminded me that my father had other children besides me, and that "no doubt I was forming my plans." Then, Mrs. Cantankerous would ask one sister, and Miss De Meanour would ask another, what I was going to do next?

This expectation, and all this surprising interest that was manifested in me and my fortunes, daily increased, till at the end of six months it grew to the breadth of "What! Mr. Harry still here?—still at home!" As much as to say, "What! still living on your parents? An overgrown child like you not weaned yet!"—How many ways are there, in that everyday conversation which pretends to be the courteous interchange of sterling sentiments—how many ways there are of palming and uttering the base coin of an envious spirit!

To borrow the illustration of the fairy tale, how many a heart must be teeming with toads and vipers, if we judge by the venom which, however artfully disguised, is hourly escaping through the lips! "Put out your tongue," says the doctor; and, not only physically but morally, I could not wish for a surer test of all being sound within. But "God ruleth over all." Wasps and reptiles have their use in his scheme of mercy; so, doubtless, have ill-natured men and women. Perhaps they are designed as the police, or the detectives of society, or like Joseph Humes in the House of Commons—ready to hit every blot, and teaching us a safe and cautious game.

And so it came to pass, that the waspish impertinence of some silly old dames roused me to exertion. Samuel Edwards's observation recurred forcibly to my mind. It was indeed time, as he said, that I made room "in the family nest, and began to peck a little on my own account." But really it wanted something to rouse me, as it does to rouse any man fresh from College—to a full sense of the truth that his father's purse and patience have an end, and he must work for himself. All my life up to that date I had been passive—the object, not the agent—the channel of parental

affection, and the nursling of anxiety and care. The sums paid on my account to old Griskin for schooling, and the cheques for battels and pocket-money while at College — I am ashamed of my thoughtlessness when I confess it — called forth the mere formal thanks of courtesy to my father, but gratitude, as for the hardly-saved earning of self-denial, none! — It is a very impressive and a very painful reflection which I have made throughout life, that till we have ourselves attained to a parent's position, or a parent's age, it is wonderful how little we feel that debt we never can repay.

It was only after years had passed away, when the good old man had been carried by us to the church of our infancy, and we had returned, and returned without him,—when his drawers and desk had been ransacked, and we felt all our old childish scruples in peeping into those mysterious pigeon-holes so carefully closed under lock and key,—it was only then, as the family purse fell under my control, that I could realise those anxious qualms with which one draws on capital to advance a youth in this world—a certain loss for a most uncertain advantage. It was only then that I could realise how—far more than twenty long years—the family yearnings had pulled one way, and a father's foresight made him pull the other: and that all our little "'tis buts" and petitions for treats and indulgence seemed like so many gnawings at a cable which alone kept the family vessel from drifting at the mercy of the winds and waves!

It was therefore high time that I should "do something profitable;" but I had more mentors still. At College I was, what they call, prudent, and did not leave like numbers, overwhelmed with debt. And so, reader, you are perhaps clear and even with the demands of this world; but put all the mere nothings that you owe as compactly together as if you had to change your present residence, and you would find it a little inconvenient to provide. And if so, feel for me.

It was now Christmas, and the compliments of the season fell thick upon me in the shape of tradesmen's bills. Every supposed five or six shillings turned out eleven and tenpence, and bills expected as one pound ten stared me in the face as two pounds twelve. Then, my father had talked so confidently of having done with College dues at last that I had not the heart to undeceive him.

There are many methods of teaching a man the value of money; but the most impressive of all is, "Only let him try to borrow some." That will indeed be "a caution" to any man. Something must be done. So, first of all I went to Mr. Field, our

solicitor—begged him on no account to tell my father of my application—but I wanted, "quite in the way of business, fifty pounds at interest." Mr. Field uttered a kind of half-audible "hem," and looked a little quiet and serious. Then we talked some twenty minutes: I explaining my difficulty, he, the nature of "good security." The result was that, as the most civil kind of negative, he referred me to our banker.

Mr. Meadows, the banker, a good, worthy soul, had known me from a child, and forgot—for indeed there was little then to remind him—that I was not a child still. With an intuitive perception of the cause of my nervousness and confusion, he led me by the arm into his private room, the technical term for which is "the sweating-room," so called from the way that the courage of needy applicants oozes through their palms. He then said I must compose myself, and tell my story.

I was melted by his sympathy, I made a clean breast at once. I said how unwilling I was to trouble my father, and expressed my hopes of soon earning money to repay the loan. He replied instantly, that loans for indefinite periods were contrary to all rules of banking, and then he continued—"Your scruples, my good friend, as to your father, do you much honour, and your application might indeed be, just now——that is, your father has a family, you know, and many expenses. I would gladly advise you for the best." He then paused awhile, as if in meditation,—a pause which was anything but rest from anxiety to me. He then continued,—

"Now take my advice, Mr. Harry: spare your feelings the pain—utterly fruitless, I am quite sure—of applying in matters of money to casual friends. I have not served to my time of life at the tables of the money-changers without learning, how this world's friendship shrinks and recoils at the very name of gold. Your simplicity interests me deeply, for I well remember when your confiding spirit was my own. I know better now. The money of the generous is soon bespoken; the money of the selfish is clutched to the very grave. Prefer your request to some relation, and if you succeed—as I hope and trust you may—you will learn to prize relationship in this life, and will never after forget that, in the day of adversity, the family circle too often comprises our only friends."

As I walked homewards, I felt as if three hours had made me three years older. Fifty pounds seemed to me so little, but to everybody else so much. Well, I thought, it is time indeed I should earn something.—Earn! but this would sacrifice my inde-

pendence!—No sooner had I muttered this to myself than I almost laughed aloud. Independence, indeed! Why, a debtor is a slave! A set of cobblers and tailors at this very hour hold me by a tie which nothing but dishonesty can part; and perhaps they want money for their creditors, too, and are running about in vain to borrow because I withhold their own!

My mind was soon made up. I determined to lose no time in seeking for a tutorship in some rich family. Whether expected to walk with the housekeeper, or doomed to be snubbed by the butler, at that balancing of miseries, I cared not a rush; but meanwhile the payment of my debts could admit of no delay. Accordingly, I wrote to my fond and ever-kind Aunt Charlotte, to tell my pitiful story, and to request a loan till I found employment.

The next post showed me how well founded was the advice of Mr. Meadows. I had now tried within the magic circle, and the treasure immediately appeared; and accompanied with such a letter as would throw all worldly friendships into the shade. She said she had loved me from a child; she had watched anxiously my college career, and yet more anxiously my father's various speculations, and would not for the world I should have applied to one who at that moment had demands which, she would now inform me, almost denied him rest. Still, not a word must I let drop: she was aware of all his perplexities, and had been making a purse for several years, as so much heart's-ease, in case her poor brother should come to grief. God had ever blessed her store, and early had she learnt that prudence was the keystone of charity.

She inclosed fifty pounds, and said this I must consider as a gift. She dreaded the very thought of loans; there was something hard and grating in the name of creditor, and a true Christian, she felt, should never be owed anything but love. She quoted Dr. Johnson, that "being in debt made all virtues difficult, and some impracticable," and hoped I always should remember a wise saying which she was thankful that she had read in early life, that "all good men were careful first to make both ends meet, and next to give away what lapped over."

Then she ran on about "those dreadful railways"—covetousness and speculation. All the world seemed "set upon gain, and was running after reward." Her healthful instincts told her that some blow must come. Her dear brother must be distracted, she was quite sure; but what pained her most was, that his whole soul was drawn into this greedy gulf. For, Sundays or week-days to speculators were all the same; the mind was kept in one giddy

whirl, and nothing pure and peaceable could be congenial to their hearts.

I said that it was now Christmas—"Merry Christmas,"—soon to be followed by "Happy New Year." So generally is this considered a happy season; and happy indeed it is to some people—happy enough to the young and light-hearted, just as the County Assizes is a very merry time for half the town. The Assize-ball for the ladies, and rich fees for leading counsel, make very good fun indeed; but the poor prisoners would tell a different story. And how many painful convictions does the "old year out" carry to the heart! The failing merchant realises the truth that ruin is gradually stealing on: for, every balance comes out more adverse than the last; while the prodigal or the speculator finds the day of reckoning can no longer be delayed. His unconscious wife must soon hear it as the crash of thunder; his little ones may gambol round the bright Christmas fire, forming a picture of a happy home, yet every merry laugh sends a pang to the heart of him who knows how fleeting all that joy must be.

Such was my poor father's Christmas; or, rather, such it would have been, had not sundry of those drops of 'heart's-ease' from that kind and self-denying sister's cruse passed like oil into his bones.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW I BECAME A NOBLEMAN'S TUTOR, AND STUDY MEN AND MANNERS, AS WELL AS BOOKS.

I HAVE said I was perplexed by urgent demands upon my purse, and my father proved to have his difficulties too. The natural cure for poverty is hard work. My resolution was soon carried into effect. Mr. Meadows made known my intentions, and by his kind exertions, in two months I was private tutor to Lord Oxton's son, to prepare him for Eton, and had nestled down in a snug little room looking over the deer-park at Norlands. I was not long in making acquaintance with another private tutor at a neighbouring country house, and with three curates, and soon heard the talk of the neigbourhood.

My own position was a most enviable one. Lord Oxton was not of the fungus tribe. He could number some five ancestors in the family vault, and his honours sat easy on him. I dwell on this point, because the family vault is almost the only distinctive characteristic of nobility now remaining. Even tombstones have been forged—baronial armour can be ordered like tin kettles—a voluptuous-looking great-grandmother by Sir Peter Lely, and a piqued-chinned ancestor by Vandyke;—all these things are matters for the upholsterer. I have even known a library ordered by the yard! These last-mentioned insignia of gentility were all correct in the mansion of the rich Mr. Marchmont, to whom my friend Bailey was private tutor; but, as the retired manufacturer entered the church—quite the private chapel of Norlands—the family monument, with old Lord and Lady Oxton sleeping uncomfortably on their backs, and two little Oxtons in marble chemises kneeling for everlasting at their sides, seemed every Sunday to say to the pretentious Mrs. Marchmont, "Live up to that, ma'am, if you can."

"I could get on very well with Marchmont," said Bailey, "but it is the lady who is so fine. A Sheffield manufactory sharpens

wits as well as knives, and Marchmont seems half-impatient of the donkey race of fashionable competition with a set of country noodles, as he calls them, which his wife has persuaded him to run. He said to me, 'Life is made up of competition: competition as boys for school prizes, as well as in games of trap and ball; competition as men, whether in professions or in trade. It is not the money that made me happy, any more than the fox in hunting —not that I ever see much of the fox after a field or two, you know —only, the money scores up and registers our gains and success, and that too in a most absorbing game. No! it is, as I said, the competition. Now, this being the case, I like competition about something useful, not in such trash as the cut of liveries, or the breed of puppy-dogs. To calculate the demand of distant markets, and to be complimented on 'Change with my foresight in ventures to the other side of the globe, this I consider worth my while; but bless me, in this dull place men are so slow! If they were any slower they would stand still. Oxton has some sense in him, certainly; he has onerous duties, both in the country and in the House. But, as to the rest of the people here, when I meet them at the magistrates' meeting, they don't like me. Despatch business is what I am used to, and I have no idea of letting the clerk find brains for the whole bench, as at the magistrates' meetings he too often does: so, I'm too sharp for them, and am like a wire-haired terrier among so many fat poodles: and then they look cool at me when we meet at dinner. As to these absurd and show-off dinner-parties, they give a great deal of trouble and very little pleasure. And people are so envious of Mrs. Marchmont, for distancing them so cruelly with her plate and finery, that they keep up a kind of county-clique conversation, purposely to make her feel that she is not used to that. I only wish we had never come here—we were both happy at Sheffield, and here we are both miserable!"

"Now, do you know," said Bailey, "I was not aware of all this when I came here; and at the first party, I forgot I was asked to dine in the room only for the style of the thing, and as 'our tutor,' and part of the establishment: so, I had the unconscionable presumption to sit up at table, and to look around me as if I were still Bailey of Oriel."

"Why, that is just what I do at Norlands," I replied, "allowing for some natural deference and reserve."

"Yes, you lucky fellow! you are safe enough. Lord Oxton has no part to play but his own, so you would have yourself only to blame if you did not feel quite at your ease. However, on the

occasion in question, the consequence of my mistake was, that the guests paid off Mrs. Marchmont by performing feats of undivided attention to me whenever I opened my lips. College stories came forth to their great amusement—for they kept on drawing me out —till at last they told Mr. and Mrs. Marchmont, as plainly as inuendo impertinence could speak, that they could not rival their own tutor, in spite of their plate, glass, china, made dishes, and all."

I have seen many Baileys and many Marchmonts throughout life. I have seen many young men commit the great mistake of being too brilliant, and thus throwing their rich friends, dinners and all, into the shade. What Mr. Marchmont said is true. This life is nothing without competition of some kind; and since a thousand can only compete with money, to one who can compete with mind, it is with money and money's worth that those who have neither taste nor talent ever will compete for this world's applause.

As to the jealousy of the men of money against the men of mind—the thought that in this happy land there is one free and open course for all, and that the lawn sleeves and the ermine robe are sometimes worn by men whose fathers and mothers could never rise higher than the oak bench in the squire's hall—the common sight of a suburban villa, with, perhaps, some lath-and-plaster Minerva *vis-à-vis* to chalk Apollo on the grass-plot, standing as a monument of the fact that Mr. Figs the grocer, or Mr. Tape the draper, was a promising boy in the school of commerce, and left off at the top of his class;—this, I admit, is truly gratifying to every generous mind.

The touchy fraternity of Messrs. Figs and Tape I have had to deal with in almost every parish I have undertaken; and great are the difficulties this class has caused me. Reserve they call "pride," and a delicacy of feeling is "being stiff;" and I have seemed to them purposely to raise a frostwork of etiquette "to chill the genial current of their soul." When a blaze of plate had been rubbing up all the morning on purpose to astonish me, and my looks evinced no astonishment after all; and when my wife's simple muslin did not even catch a blush from Mrs. Tape's scarlet satin, it was of course a cruel disappointment to people whose consequence had nothing else but plate and satin to support it. So we have always been unpopular with such people.

If so little is the sympathy between the clergy and the shopocracy on week-days, what a bar to all persuasiveness on Sundays! Such is the melancholy truth. We feel easy and at home in a cottage; we feel equally at home in a palace. The peer and the

ploughman, the duchess and the dairymaid, alike confess in the Church-of-England clergy a heart and feeling in unison with their own. But the class between, just hanging on to the skirts of gentility, live on Brother Jonathan's own terms of misunderstanding.

If, therefore, my young clerical friends, you have hitherto known none but the habits of good society, I would advise you by no means to step across the social line. Be kind and accessible during the hours of duty; but beware of visiting out of your proper circle. It is true you may, like Robinson Crusoe, live in so desolate a land that you may be thankful even to make acquaintance with a savage. Country gentlemen, on wet and dreary days, pay the groom a morning call in the saddle-room, and the gardener an afternoon visit in the tool-house, in obedience to the same social instinct. I would simply caution you not to go beyond your accustomed circle with a view of gaining any vantage-ground with your parishioners. Painful experience has taught me, that people who associate with their superiors are always so suspicious of slight or neglect, that intimacy results in far more ill-feeling than it is ever likely to obviate. Something is sure to jar and to cause a painful misunderstanding.

But to return to Norlands. I now had time for reading, and time for diversion also. The keeper never refused Mr. Austin's assistance in hitting down some twenty brace of birds. Trout-fishing followed in the proper season; and, remembering Samuel Edwards's advice, I became gradually a close observer of the mind and manners of the poor—a much-neglected branch of moral philosophy. Their instincts and their intuitions are as true as ours, but their reasonings are very brief. One argument, one fact, and one conclusion may prevail; but a series of connected arguments is lost upon them.

Another observation I made around Norlands was, that the poor are hard of hearing, and comparatively deaf, as also slow of hearing or of receiving strong impressions. The Barrister knows this, and the Dissenter knows it, and both adopt a style to suit their dull and sleepy nature. They are lucid and energetic—they limit themselves to a few and striking topics,—they are not afraid of putting the same fact in an almost tedious variety of ways.

"Suppose, I say"—this is the remark of an intelligent Dissenter—"My brethren, 'the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' Honest John says to himself, 'What's that? I wasn't quite listening: let us hear that again.'—Well, soon it

comes a second time, and he thinks 'Very well; now I like that, as much as I can catch of it.' In a minute or two it comes a third time, and he can say both parts of the text over to himself. Then I divide it into two parts and pound away with, first: the *Heart is deceitful*, with a remark or two, and an appeal to John's own experience. After that I tell the story of David, and how Nathan made David feel the deceitfulness of his heart; for David had overlooked in himself the very sin he so heartily condemned in another. John remembers that story, and tells it again at the stile or the almshouse as he goes home. I end with pounding away that the heart is also *desperately wicked*, and remind John of murders, and lying, and cheating, and swearing, all signs of a wicked heart; and then I wind up by saying Who can alone make the heart less deceitful and less wicked, and Who alone can blot out of God's book all the deceit and lying, and all sin and wickedness now written so black against us.

"Now, sir," he continued, "pardon me; but in one of your sermons you will say ten times as much, but not give John time to swallow and not a chance of digesting any one thing that you tell him. You think it is not like a scholar to use many words; but remember, the Barrister does not think so: he uses more words or few, according as he addresses a common jury of farmers or a special jury of educated men. Nay more, if you hear the same Barrister arguing before the Judges, he seems almost independent of all rules of speech. Reference to well-known cases and brief suggestions convey as much as a long argument."

In the course of my rambles, the keepers, the grooms, and the gardeners of Norlands, bore ample testimony to the truth of these remarks: "My lord likes us to go to church," said James Bell, "and so we go: but we edify most at meetings by a pretty deal. A very good gentleman is your Mr. Hunter, but we don't carry much of his sermons away with us. Last Sunday I thought I had the first part in my head, when on came the second part, and while I was trying to mind that too, on comes the third part, and puts them both out. But, sir, when we comes out of meetings, there is always something to think of and to talk of, so it is best for those who are not scholars any how."

When I heard this, I remembered what worthy Fuller said about not being too concise in a popular discourse: "Without a fair proportion of chaff in his feed, the horse is apt to bolt his oats."

Mr. Hunter, the curate, I saw frequently, and I met two or three other young clergymen at his lodging, which was of a very

simple description, at a neighbouring farm-house. One and all of these curates talked about "our Squire" and his temper and peculiarities, and how to humour and conciliate him. It seemed to me at first that each curate had a dangerous yard-dog to throw a sop to; so I asked, in my innocence, what squires could have to do with clerical life.

"A very natural question for a novice," said Hunter; "but were I examining chaplain to a bishop, I would set one paper of questions, not only about managing a parish, but also about managing a squire: ay, and I would ask how they would keep on good terms with a rector's wife, too."

"Yes," said the Rev. Daniel Alton, "very necessary lore indeed. I was going on swimmingly at my last parish. My school was getting fast out of debt; and I had one old surplice mended and one new one ordered for me the same year. Miss Saunders (she was our squire's daughter) used to take round the Soup Book and Clothing-Club Book) and could show me an entire list of subscriptions all marked 'Pd.'—a set of half-and-half people would pay her out of gentility, and to keep their standing in a certain clique; not all from charity, you know. Well, all this parochial prosperity was dashed to the ground, ostensibly because I would catechise after the second lesson."

"What! did the squire object? You should have had no sermon."

"Nor had I. My catechetical lecture was introduced instead of any sermon. My congregation kept increasing—our rustics learnt to listen, and seemed actually to be brightened up. I took great pains; I got together a stock of pat and pithy definitions: for, catechising requires careful study, it improves parsons as well as parish boys; and, just as all the cottagers were saying how much they learned—good lessons for parents as well as children, and all that—old Saunders said he considered such practices ultra-High-Church, and he couldn't countenance Tractarian heresies, but must nip them in the bud; and therefore he requested I would give it up."

"What! and did the clergy consent to be dictated to by the laity in this way?"

"Unhappily, the clergy did not. He stoutly maintained his point, and——"

"But he must have been a very ignorant man," I observed.

"If you are not prepared for darkness in high places, you will never manage a parish. But, you have not heard my story. Well, one day, when our subscription-list for the soup, the

clothes, and the school, were all half-blank together—when I was wasting my time in collecting, because Miss Saunders gave it up—when the charity-boys went birds'-nesting because there was *no* squire to give their mothers *no* soup, for putting *no* stick about their truant backs,—when, at every bad answer of the boys, the depreciating looks from the squire's pew were telegraphed among the hobnails and corduroys, ever siding with the stronger—and when I was so annoyed that I had hardly the spirit to catechise at all; I walked in about ten o'clock one morning, with my gun on my shoulder, to see Mr. Rotton; a respectable farmer, and the following conversation ensued:—

"'So, then, our squire has not stopped your shooting after all?'

"'No, he never mentioned the subject. You know that when I shoot I always rise at day-break, and I have generally bagged as many brace before ten o'clock as the squire can kill in a fortnight, and then I am fresh for parish work with the whole day before me.'

"'Yes. I heard the squire say as much—He is not much of a shot, is he? And when you have been out early and made the birds shy, the young squires laugh at him more than ever—They twig all about the Catechism, sir, I can tell you that.'

"'About the Catechism?'

"'Yes. All a pretence, sir; only that is your fancy, and shooting's his. So now, sir, you know as much as I do. You crossed him, and he has crossed you. If it had not been Catechism, it would have been something else.'

"'Really you surprise me, Mr. Rotton! But—true—it did occur to me that it was strange that a man who seemed to have so little religion in him, should be so particular about the very shade of it.'

"'Yes, sir; and if you'll take my advice, you won't waste your time here. Nothing can be carried against the big house.'

"'Then you think a squire's influence so very great in the parish?'

"'If the Dissenters had the squires on their side, they'd have all the poor. The squire's influence reaches everywhere. Farmers are looking after leases; labourers are looking after work; the bad ones of the parish want to stand well with the Justice; the paupers fear an enemy at the Board of Guardians; and nearly all are on the look-out for picking sticks, leasing, holiday ale, or old clothes. Even civil words and good looks from the squire's family on Sundays—all *this* helps. But the strongest power of all is

the jealousy of these poor ignorant souls—there's so much jealousy about the gifts of the lady and her friends. It isn't the value of what any one gets, but the fear that one should be set before another. Why, the hundredth part of a chance of Sally Tibbs being sent for up to the big house before Hannah Reed, would carry a poor family any way.—You've remarked the red cloaks among the church-going people, haven't you, sir?—Well, these red cloaks all came of a fancy of one of Squire Saunders's visitors. For that gentleman observed that a red cloak looked pretty, as he saw Dame Williams on the common: and, whenever he comes here to enjoy some hunting, he is sure to bring two or three red cloaks, and this keeps all eyes set upon the Hall people more than ever.'

"'I remember the cloaks,' said Eddowes; 'and I can easily suppose that, as to jealousy, they were like so many coals of fire in the parish. I know the poor well enough for that—the poor! did I say?—whether broken victuals in a red pitcher, or a venison dinner at Norlands—whether old shoes and red cloaks at the Hall, or stars and garters and the gold stick in waiting at the Palace—whether a keeper's lodge, or 'the Woods and Forests,' be the bone thrown into the human kennel, dogs of high and low degree all snarl and fight alike.'"

I have often thought of this conversation.—Yes, envy and jealousy form, of all foul streams, the most mighty in giving an impulse to the machinery of this world. Self-interest is always deemed strong, but envy, within its own dark sphere, is mightier, because more virulent and searching still.

I have as yet said nothing of my pupil, the Honourable Reginald Oxton, a boy of ten years of age, nor of Lady Oxton, whose tender and benevolent feelings made from the first a deep impression on my mind. There was a fair promise in Reginald, still he was fidgety and restless, starting like a caged bird if the keeper's gun broke the silence of our secluded study. The less attentive is the pupil, the greater is the strain upon the master. There is so much power of shock in the electric eel, and that expended, the creature is powerless for a certain season. There is also a kind of nervous electricity in the human brain quite as easy to discharge. Such is the exhaustion of teaching or education in its highest sense; that is, of throwing off sparks of energy, and parting with your own Promethean fire to awake to life some duller nature.

No doubt, some tutors are mere machines, and turn hogsheads into puncheons, and hundredweights into chaldrons, without any

anxiety or thought. A dull automaton may "*tupto* it," by the hour, as my Uncle Toby says, and may murder Homer with a quiet conscience, and even grow fat upon his work, because he may feloniously keep back all mind out of the matter—even as a cook keeps the brandy from a Christmas pudding—and then we may say with Byron,—

"'Tis Greece, but living Greece no more."

But, for my own part, mechanically, I never could work. If there was no sphere for my mind, my hand and tongue refused their several office.

My exertions were not lost. Lord and Lady Oxton saw at once that I was devoted to their son's best interest; and they probably appreciated my perseverance the more highly, because they measured my toil and patience in teaching by the effort it would have required in themselves. They therefore treated me with kind attention. Indeed, it is easy to suppose that the society of a cheerful, happy-minded, and lively young man—for at that time none of the darker cares of life had weighed me down—one who would come and go, just as they felt inclined for an hour's variety,—that this would be acceptable enough in a country house; and it was plain that my tone and manner suited them. For lords and ladies can be but gentle in their minds and manners. My parents and all my early companions were gentle too—all of that class called independent.

Oh, what an earthly blessing is contained in that single word Independence!—No customers could bid them be civil under pain of starvation; and no one had a hand on their purse-string, which, as regards power to dictate, is like having a finger and thumb on your gullet—so, they grew up gentlemen.

Of this class, I say, were my parents—gentle in expression, because the deeper cares and severities of busy life had never knit their brows, or given sharpness to their features—gentle in their carriage, because they had never been trained to watch an office clock, nor had any hard taskmaster hurried them out of all gracefulness of movement: they were also gentle or easy and composed, in themselves, because they had never sold the birthright of free agency, nor registered themselves as so many male and female cogs in the grinding and crushing wheels of mechanical life.—If such were my advantages, Lord and Lady Oxton could not have enjoyed much greater, and we were, therefore, in unison and sympathy with each other. When I add, that I was almost a boy

compared to them, feeling that instinctive deference which a Lord-lieutenant and one in the councils of her Majesty would naturally inspire, it will readily be supposed that they were pleased to find how little I was in the way, and how contentedly I resigned myself to my happy fate. My friend, tutor to Mr. Marchmont, amused me greatly: it seemed as much as he could do to maintain his own dignity, while mine took care of itself. The slightest hint from Lady Oxton would start me, without my hat, to the other end of the park: while Mrs. Marchmont's orders made poor Bailey indignant for a week!

While at Norlands, I learnt that the nobility are much misrepresented. No allowance is made for the fact that they are not only cradled in luxury, but flattered throughout life with the most fulsome adulation. Often have I blushed for my fellow-creatures to see how men would put their very necks beneath Lord Oxton's foot, and afterwards talk of pride because he trod upon them! Often have I seen letters addressed and audiences solicited, with every mendacious pretext of public business, by some silly fellow who simply desired to vary his lifelong insignificance by stuttering in the presence of a live lord.

The same morbid love of notoriety which makes one set of idiots shoot at the sovereign, makes another set pester noblemen. So a nobleman is compelled, in self-defence, to assume a distant manner to avoid intrusion, and this manner is represented as proud. It always seemed to me, that Lord Oxton found it quite refreshing to deal with one whose only boast it is that he minded his own business, and never imagined that any one knew whether a young fellow like me was at the end of the building or not.

The less notice I expected, the more I received. My ear became by degrees the natural vent for the little annoyances, as well as a channel for the more generous impulses which ever form, with the rich as with the poor, the lights and shades of daily life.

Lady Oxton—excuse my saying so much of one who early stole upon my heart—at ease herself, set all at ease around her. You should have heard Mrs. Harper, the steward's wife, and Jane Price, at the Lodge, talk before her. Her ladyship was not more free from curiosity, and listening to what people said, than other daughters of Mother Eve; and they had always enough to tell her, and she liked to hear them talk. A hermit in his cell may live in secret, but all persons with servants live in glass-houses. If ladies are curious about the movements of the palace, our labourers' wives are equally eager to learn and to chronicle the doings of the manor-house; so, nothing but the rigours of a silent

system could have prevented this lady from knowing all the petty rivalries and petty intrigues of petty people, to enjoy the passing sunbeams of her own favour.

And these genial sunbeams cheered and transported—and I may say, that they eventually purified and exalted—me for two whole years. This noble lady had known her share of trouble. Pale Death, says Horace, visits us all in turn, whether at the cottage or the squire's hall. So, one painful subject was always recurring to her thoughts. Her eldest son, a fine young man, of about my own age and appearance, within only one year of the day never to be forgotten—the festive celebration of his coming of age—caught cold in a blighting easterly wind, by the cover's side, and died of inflammation.

Many a mourner believes that the spirits of the dead, having "shuffled off this mortal coil," can burst from out their prison-house, and walk this earth again. So much undoubtedly is true—their memories cling to their former haunts, and the yearning imagination of a mother could easily replace on that lordly terrace the much-loved form of her darling Sidney, as there he stood and addressed the assembled tenantry, so soon once more to assemble on the same spot, and thence slowly to follow him to the grave.

One day I saw her start, as the keeper's gun was echoed from the Five-Oaks Hill—her Sidney's favourite wood for pheasants; and then she said, with a moving depth of sigh, "Ah! but that gun isn't his!" And so, gradually, the painfully flattering truth broke upon me that I was, in her imagination, identified with that son, and my mother's supposed anxieties with hers: then, all the care and watchfulness for my health, which I never appreciated in my own mother, seemed quite a burthen of obligation when reflected in a mother—no mother to me!

But, where was I? How goes my story?—Some one will stop and exclaim, "Was this a preparation for Holy Orders? Would you tell us that this was making ready for the Church?" It had, I think, a nearer connexion than some would suppose; for, I was reading new pages in the book of life, and studying human nature in a new aspect. So far well. At this period of my life I was full of buoyancy and youthful spirits, like a young steam-engine blowing off; while shooting, fishing, and teaching Reginald to play at cricket, were as so many safety-valves for my pent-up energies; for, I was but twenty-one years of age. And is it no preparation for the most solemn of all responsibilities, to be cooling down and sobering—to be working off the yeast of passion, and to be enjoying the fresh air and influences of creation,

while the sap is rising into every branch of the future tree—doomed as that tree is to weather many a pitiless storm before death lays his axe at the root?

There are some persons, I am very well aware, who would have sent me, without any allowance for my youthful character or age, to a training institution at some cathedral city, where I should have "practised sermon-writing under correction," and had a district for visiting the sick. I am far from saying that some men may not derive great benefit from such a system; but I must maintain it would not have suited my constitution, nor that of certain others. For, some men have no buoyancy to effervesce—no ardent spirits to rectify—mere bookworms, all head and no body, and rather of the nervous than the sanguineous temperament.

Such men I knew at College—men who were said, when at school, to have studied all play hours, and who at College walked on the tow-path of the river, while others spirted along in skiffs and out-riggers—men who never took active exercise, only a solemn "constitutional" round the park, or Christ-Church Walk—men whose energies were barely enough for work, with none to spare for play. With men of this character, a training college, so reasonable in theory, may have no disadvantages in practice. Persons who can read any book but the book of nature, who have no eyes for anything but letterpress, and never will study man in the original, such students may as well fly from the broad light of day to a college as to their private studies. But, for my own part, I cannot regret that I was otherwise employed. We have but a partial view of human nature while at college, and there is on the part of society a general conspiracy to blind our eyes to things as they are from the hour we enter the Church, for it is almost conventional to address the clergy in a falsetto tone, and with an affected puritanism of topics and of sentiments; but as to that world, of which the clergy are proverbially ignorant, the only truthful glimpse—the only honest view by daylight we can ever hope to see, is in general society, between College and Holy Orders.

Believing that in this brief twilight of my existence I had the faculty of observation, I cannot regret that I was not doomed to study that Bowdler edition of man, too often to be found in a collegiate institution or in a cathedral city. As to being taught to write sermons, of all men in this mortal world, the clergy are the last to teach it. The coachman aforesaid, the keeper, the Dissenter, the cottager, ay, and the casual remarks of the squire and his wife and daughters—all these persons have given me useful hints for sermons; but as to my clerical brethren—I freely

acknowledge I have not been always innocent of the faults I impute to others, when I say it—their indigestible abstractions, their uninteresting choice of topics, their frigid latinisms, their balanced sentences, and, sometimes, their stilted baby-isms and tesselated English—in short, that libel on all scholar-like language, so aptly called by old Edwards "pulpit," or "parsons' English," this style a Training College has, I fear, a tendency to stereotype. I say, tendency. Happy should I be to hear that such tendencies are counteracted, and that the students not only "write sermons under correction," but that they are sent to the wayside to learn their mother-tongue.

My youthful friends, if you cannot afford this new preparation for the Church, remember it is your own fault if you do not find a fair field of observation and practice around your own homes. But, if some pious and loving Aunt Charlotte should arrange to provide you with a course of pastoral theology at a Training College, by all means beware of that crust of prejudice, and that sectional view of things, which is almost inseparable from clerical societies.

The prejudices of clerical societies? Yes. But if I so speak, it is not fair that any one should consider me as a traitor to my order; for every other class of men has its prejudices too. Have we not seen learned and enlightened judges clinging to the hangman's rope, or to Chancery abuses? Have we not seen men of science as physicians, as desirous to take blood out of their patients as their successors would be to put more blood in? Surely, then, my friends may admit that the fogs and mists of this mortal sphere are not likely to spare the vision of the clergy alone. More than once have I seen a well-meaning rector persevering in a course which every plain man in the parish knew would offend half the congregation, and end in nothing after all! And why? Simply because the clergyman often moves in one narrow circle of people, who reflect his opinions or flatter his weakness; while he, poor man! supposes that this clerical clique is a fair sample of the feelings and opinions of the world at large.

But there is another reason why a Training College would not have agreed with my case and constitution.

Some men are younger in character than others, and I am speaking as one who—as regards a family-man's look and a middle-aged gentleman's regulation step—was rather a backward child. And most vehemently do I protest against the absurdity that would squeeze the starting muscles and the restless energies of a brawny, florid-complexioned man, as I was, into the Procrustean crib of my lath-and-plaster friend Winsley, whose blood scarcely trickled

through his veins at two knots an hour. It is in vain to shut your eyes to physical facts. We cannot fill our parishes with some 17,000 young men, all of the sober serious cast, which older and world-weary men naturally exhibit. It is dangerous to force or thwart youthful and buoyant natures; you only make them grow awry, and throw out suckers in the shape of *isms*.

Henry Dolby was a case in point. I think I see Dolby at this moment coming into my rooms at Baliol—his waistcoat bursting with his wide-expanding chest, his eyes sparkling, as if a merry sprite were laughing out of each of them, and all his muscles quivering to be at something. Yes, Dolby, I think I can see you now hitting furiously on the Bullingdon Cricket-ground, or exulting in the racing-boat, or taking headers into Sandford Lasher. In every party your voice was loudest, and always in the opposition: in-doors or out, you liked to pull against the stream. Now, you would have been a rare man for a Training College, certainly! you wanted age and "keeping," and time to work off nature's fermentation; and you ought never to have been ordained, even at twenty-three: nor must we forget that a Training College does, in effect, begin clerical life earlier still.

"Have you heard of Dolby?" inquired some old college friend several years after college days. "He is levelling his churchyard; he is setting up crosses; he is declaring war against churchwardens' whitewash; he is restoring to their ancestral seats a heap of rubbish disinterred from the belfry, while his sexton claims it for the marine-store shop. What can it all mean?"—"Mean!" replied a shrewd observer, "it means that Harry is himself again; find him some other sphere for his antagonistic spirit and superfluous energies, and you will divert the stream which you cannot hope to stop."

But I must be back to my pupil in the wing-room of Norlands.

Behold there a little boy one side of the table, and a big boy on the other. I was but a boy; I was still growing, still expanding in mind and feeling, if not in body. Behold both the said boys learning, and, in one sense, both cramming. For, the little boy was cramming Homer and Cicero; the big boy, the Bible and Church History. His object was to squeeze into Eton, and mine to pass the no-less apprehended examination of a Bishop's Chaplain. Yes, that examination was indeed apprehended; the very thought of it made me nervous. I inquired for recent examination-papers of all my friends. Every paper I received made me feel how much there was which I did not know; and—who ever

saw an examination-paper without feeling the same humiliating sensation?

One day, I was alarmed and made to study most desperately at seeing this question: "Give a list of the kings of Israel and of Judah." "Name the Judges, and the principal events in the life of each." "Bless me," I thought, "here is an examination for the first morning in a Bishop's palace!" My friend Alton happened to call on that morning, and I told him that really I had a great deal to read: for, the questions were most appalling; and no sooner had I mastered the set from one Bishop's examination, than the next set of questions seemed to sow more dragons' teeth ready to destroy me. "Yes," he said, "every Bishop's Chaplain has his own crotchets and his own style of questions; but who is to examine you?" I replied, "As yet I do not know who will examine me."

"Not know, indeed!" said Alton: "then how can you read up to him, if you don't know as much as his name?"

"Read up to him!" I said. "Well, this is college cramming over again."

"Certainly," he replied, "you cannot exhaust all theology; so you must study, not only your books, but your examining chaplain, and make your ideas the counterpart of his. Go West, and you must read up all about Baptismal Regeneration; go East, and you will be tried in the New Testament and Conversion; and my chaplain in the Midland Counties would be greatly prepossessed with a candidate who reflected his own views of Christian Assurance. And this reminds me of John Hawkins, who was plucked at Norwich. John used seriously to ascribe his miscarriage to the fact that *his* chaplain was absent on a wedding-tour—of course, with the Bishop's daughter; bishops' chaplains and bishops' daughters having a very general partiality for each other—and the examining substitute was a plain common-sense man, who said, 'Bible knowledge first and (what men called) doctrines afterwards;' so, poor Hawkins was floored, as he said, in the very A B C of the matter."

Much more conversation followed, and I most wisely determined to know my Bible, if I knew nothing else.

I said, I resolved to know my Bible; indeed, "to get it up." Examinations compel "getting up," though, really, I am ashamed to think of the mechanical modes to which I once thought it necessary to resort. "What is this?" said Lady Oxton, one day as she came into the study to see, as she kindly said, that all my comforts were attended to, and espied some paper pinned to the

wall.—I smiled in a way that encouraged her to look again. "Oh, dear!" she said. "Well, I have heard of 'cramming,' and I suppose this is it. Those kings of Israel and those kings of Judah *vis-à-vis* to one another! It is what I did, when I was a girl, with the kings of England and the kings of France, deeply regretting that no two of them ever came to their throne the same day, to spare my awkward diagonal lines, to keep them better acquainted with each other."

On another occasion, her ladyship was amused with seeing a tabular view of Sacred History, and said, "I see; learning your lessons for the Bishop." She then made some casual observations on a difficult text of Scripture, whereupon I thought very confidently to enlighten her from some of my superficial reading, and I was venturing quite secure and off my guard, because with "only a lady opponent," as I thought, when, to my great confusion, three or four arrows came so pointed from her ample quiver, as Pindar would say, that I saw my danger in an instant.

Lady Oxton had enjoyed singular advantages in her Biblical studies. She had spent happy hours with Wilberforce, and heard from his honeyed lips the deeper truths of that disciple whom Jesus loved. She had passed one "recess" with Canning, and the strong man had laid his throbbing temples as in a Delilah's lap, and told the secret of his strength, and all the fiery passages of the prophets, from which, as from many other poetic sources, he had culled those flowers armed with thorns, the imagery and the energy of his speech. She had made a fireside journey in the footsteps of St. Paul, and had heard from her companion how to this day the Gulf Stream causes the mariner to "fetch a compass," and sail circuitously from Syracuse to Rhegium.

Lady Oxton, indeed, was a most interesting and charming companion. Do not mistake my admiration. Her loveliness consisted, at that time of her life, chiefly in a gentle heart and enthusiastic mind; and all throughout her life men of high degree, in intellect as well as rank, had made offerings to her loveliness; for, the venerable prelate, the prudent statesman, and that citizen of the world, the traveller—the man who had rested for years but on Turkish mats, or in wigwams beneath wide-leaved palms, or in tents in the sandy desert—had all been frequent guests at Norlands, and had vied with each other in enjoying the intellectual sympathies of Lady Oxton. Always of a devotional tone of mind, many a trial—the loss of her dear boy, Sidney; oh, how that overtopped them all! filling her cup, she said, till it could hold no more—had made her cling to her Bible, and read it

with an energy quite unknown to me; and so, gradually, intellectual flowers innumerable had clustered round her Bible from many minds and many lands. And, above all, she had lived through nearly all the phases and experienced all the changes and the phenomena that the great Physician tells us of in the renewal of the soul to its proper health.

There was something so genuine and so generous in this noble lady that the natural pride of the man gave way. I made a clean breast of it; I could not help it. No man would have gained such admission of inferiority from me: but a *Mother*-Confessor, I have already said, could at any time command the *open sesame* of my heart. So I said, "The honest truth is, Lady Oxton, you are ten times better qualified for a Bishop's examination than I am; indeed, I am ashamed to make such an acknowledgment, but I confess——"

"Ashamed!" replied she. "Not ashamed? Why, should I not be the veriest dullard in existence if all my fondness for my Bible and all the interest it derives from so many 'old men eloquent' had not in five-and-twenty years—(I date from the dear Bishop Cranstown's visit)—taught me more than a *boy* like you? Pray excuse me, Mr. Austin; I called my Sidney a boy: yes, and I taught my Sidney Scripture, and as he said, the dear fellow, 'I continually kept a-head of him.' He could never overtake me; 'the larger wheel of a coach might as well try to catch the smaller wheel.' So, I have had much in my life to make the Bible familiar to me. Indeed, the very woods are vocal; I can read 'sermons in stones,' especially in the stones of our Rockwork. You understand technical memory and the effect of association; and some rich counsel—some life's lesson—is sure to recur to me as I roam about the park, and as certain to make me think of happy walks I have had the privilege of enjoying with the great and good in happy days gone by—days never to return."

"And may I venture to look upon Lady Oxton as a kind of Lady Gamaliel?" I replied.

"I would not allow you to set an undue value on my advice; but, to be quite honest, I did wish for an opportunity of telling you what my good friend, Bishop Bolton, said the very day he bid me adieu for the colony.—It so happened that I had expressed my regret that I had never spent my pin-money on a professor and learnt to read the New Testament in Greek. He replied, 'My dear lady, with all regard for exact learning, I can assure you that there is many a reputed Biblical scholar who would gain no

little on the balance by an exchange with you. If I give you a word you can complete the verse; but, too many of our clergy are deep in verbal criticism, with no compendious knowledge of the text. They are also curious about the husk, but never penetrate to the core of the matter.'—He then told me how he exhorted all clergymen to read their Bible like our old granny in the lane—book by book, over and over, till the mind grasps it all at the same time. It is only thus that you can compare Scripture with Scripture; and, with one discursive and rapid glance, see every parallel passage at the same time."

Bishop Bolton was wise. There is no such commentary as the light which Scripture reflects upon itself. As to marginal references, each student should make his own. A critical knowledge of the Greek or Hebrew, to be really valuable, must be preceded by an old granny's familiarity with the text; for he is a poor critic who does not first know the general scope of the matter.

It was easy for me to glean from Lady Oxton's charming conversation some wise lessons—from Bishop Bolton, and other good men whom the world delights to honour. This was all the more easy, because I was already tired of my own theological devices. I had been plodding my weary way with lists of names, and dates, and facts, and genealogies—the very forms and skeleton without the vital principle.

A very cold word, indeed, is that word Theology. Bible-reading is like food to the soul, but a Theologian is a kind of anatomist; he dissects an inveterate heresy in the callous spirit of a surgeon with a rare disease. This anatomy theological, undoubtedly, has its use, only it also has its snares; and the worst snare is this, it is apt to form a habit of scanning the letter in a fit of utter abstraction as to the spirit. For, just as the Bible to a printer is so much type to be set up, so, to many a theologian, it is so much text to tack his notes to.

And, actually, did a lady's arguments first convince you of your error?—"A lady's arguments!" No. But who, like a lady, can touch the chord of early association, and by old, familiar, and household words, call up the ghosts of departed lore, the traditions and first lessons of many a nursery generation? The idea of "Reading my Bible"—how else can I express it?—as Lady Oxton found me, was but a very pale photograph on the tablets of my mind; but, such was the light and warmth she diffused, that the faint picture deepened into clearer lines, till, at last, Divinity and Theology fell into the back-ground, and the identical Bible

which Aunt Charlotte gave me—at the time I said I wished it had been a top !—rose up in judgment against me.

Once more, let me say in self-defence, I am not decrying Bible scholarship ; all I mean is, that if you are a Bible critic, and would deepen letters, and chisel out the time-worn texts, do it with the veneration of an Old Mortality among the tombs of the Covenanters, and not as heartlessly as a parish sexton. For, the man who reads to criticise, himself is out of tune and in no proper frame of mind to appreciate the harmony of anything.

To do that which is called, in good household words, "reading your Bible," is one thing, but to study theology is another. Certain theologians are always "picking at the bark and rind of truth," and cracking the shells of it. Whether the shell is Greek or Hebrew, they go no deeper. Some classical students see in Sophocles only Attic Greek. Some read it for the odds and ends of Greek verses, to be brought in readily for the Porson Prize; but as to the spirit of the poetry, this is what they do not seek, and therefore do not find. Unhappily, many students apply the same desiccating process to the study of the Word of God.

The first book I read from end to end, and held as at one grasp in my mind, was the Prophet Isaiah; and when I knew the outpouring of that heaven-taught spirit so well that I could in ten minutes turn over the sixty-six chapters and feel the whole series of glowing figures, fiery terrors, and rays of distant mercy struggling with the lowering storms of justice, I felt it was a new book. I had never really read Isaiah before. Oh! how fully did I enter into the truth of the poor old bishop's remark—the bishop who was confined for seven years in the Tower of London, with only the plain text of his Bible before him, and cut off from his choice library of commentators: for, he said that no other position could have been so favourable to Bible study. So, I now read whole books at a time, and that from the very Bible of my childish years, and Aunt Charlotte's blessings were not breathed in vain. And this precious volume read indeed I did, book by book; always entire books at a time, when practicable. I read things easy and difficult in one unbroken narrative, and I often found the second page the best commentary on the first.

No sooner was my mind opened to honest Bible reading, than the terrors of my impending examination began to clear away. Before that time, the very name of the Bishop's Chaplain made me nervous, and sounded as ominous as that of the Ordinary of Newgate to a man on a trial for his life. Indeed, tried for my life,

I felt I was to be: for the disgrace of failure would be as bad as death to me: not that I had any reason to fear a failure; only, every man's heart is lighter when an examination is over, however confident of his own proficiency.

Meanwhile time fled apace, and oh, how happily! All was joyous at the time then present; all was bright as the future ever is at the age of twenty-two. The present had the ineffable joys of generous sympathy—of being loved and treated with esteem. Thucydides remarks that this is the only pleasure we can enjoy to the end of life. I can answer for one thing, it is very delightful at the beginning of it. I had labour enough to add piquancy to leisure, duty as salt to my daily bread. As to the dark group of cares and sorrows, throbbing heart and racking brain, which beset, like banditti, every critical turn in the road of this life, over all these horrors Providence had at that time let fall so thick a curtain that I used to bound away, trout-rod in hand, across the park, never doubting that the elasticity of my spirits and the energies of my mind would ever sweep away the fogs and mists of this life.

How truly did I then feel, "I have set my nest on high; I never shall be moved." Just then there was nothing to dash my happiness—no taste of bitter in my daily cup, save one; a hollow, sinking, nervous sensation about the lowest button of my waistcoat, which I felt more particularly when thinking of my impending examination. I had felt the same inward qualm up to the time I had rushed away from the door of the Schools, *testamur* in hand, at Oxford; and, I was so simple as to think that this peculiar symptom was limited to examinations, and that when once I had "passed," it would vanish for ever. I need not say that I have felt, like Tityos, the same vulture preying on my vitals on and off ever since: the causes change, but the same gnawing, the same aching void, the same unrest continues, and is ordained, no doubt, to spur this world's weary pilgrim onwards to his journey's end.

I said, time fled fast away. My pupil was soon to leave for Eton, and I must seek some curacy. This I hinted to Lady Oxton. This was a parting that might well prove touching to one who had so truly a noble woman's heart. "Time that boy should go to school" was a thing easy enough for Lord Oxton to say; for, his lordship was a man who had for years been dieted on blue-books, and had so many objects of interest and so many channels for his energies in every part of Her Majesty's dominions,

that there was no painful revulsion, no "rent in nature" with him, as with the tender mother, in having to divert that little rill which meandered nearer home.

Lord Oxton had started in a line of public life which the Order of Mendicants would call "doing the clean and respectable line." He had committed himself to the line philanthropical. For this new walk of public life, honour to the names of Wilberforce and Clarkson! Some men have charity, as some have poetry, in their very souls; others have it only by imitation, or by an acquired taste, as liking rather the accidentals than the essence of it. Some honour is due to these men also; and so it has come to pass that now-a-days philanthropy is the fashion, and, being the fashion, it is practised not the less honourably by men of kind hearts, because it is also practised by other men of no heart at all. Nay, rather, when good examples are followed from fancy and imitation, it shows how mercies are multiplied, and how blessed are the seeds that the great and good have had the privilege to sow. Many a nobleman, who, twenty years ago, would have spent his thousands upon a pack of hounds, for the style of the thing, however little a sportsman at heart, now builds model-cottages instead of a dog-kennel, and fills parish schools with children instead of the county gaols with poachers.

This was the bent of Lord Oxton, though his constitution happened to take it by infection rather than in the natural way; and the result was, that Lady Oxton and her son could now claim only a fractional part in his lordship's interest and attention. For, besides poor governesses, needlewomen, and factory children, he was quite an enthusiast in schemes for checking the felony of England, and believed they could be taught piety where their prayers were all entered in a "book of conduct," as also honesty with nothing to steal, sobriety with nothing to drink, and industry with nothing to do—forgetting that he spent as much money without reclaiming some ten old thieves, as would have kept a hundred boys in the ways of honesty.

Lady Oxton found little sympathy in such a lord. He was a very correct man, a very straightforward man, and quite a practical and common-sense man; but there was no imagination in him, no poetry, no love, no RELIGION.

No religion! What, didn't he set a proper example to his tenantry, and go to church?

Yes; this is exactly what he did. He did go to church; and he did it as an example. He believed "this sort of thing did good," that it "upheld the institutions of the country," that "rich and

poor worshipping together" was a very excellent custom; otherwise, he would say, all society was a rope of sand.

Still, Lord Oxton had no veneration—no religion, in the true sense of the word. So his poor lady experienced no response to her feelings. She found him a "negative," or a non-conductor: the genial waters of her soul could not fertilise him—he was as a dry and thirsty land. These things *were foolishness* to him. He was quite the kind of man intended by Dr. Johnson when he said, "I would pity a man who had no sense of piety, just as a man who had no ear for music." The melody of Lady Oxton's fervent and harmonious soul fell dull and senseless on her lord. I could imagine it freezing in icicles on that bleak and chilly heart.

The stream of affection—certainly the full flow of a woman's heart—will find or fret itself a channel. Young Reginald was, therefore, almost the sole object of that dear mother's love. So, well might she feel a pang at the thought that he now would turn into the Eton boy—would be seen but in the holidays—would go from Eton to Oxford, and thence into the world; and, to end all, would be gulfed, perhaps, in some *mariage à la mode* with one who would name his fond mother only to ridicule her tenderness and love.

Lady Oxton, I said, was not without some friendly interest in me, partly from association with her departed Sidney, and partly from the interest I evinced in certain sentiments which she never could express without discouragement to his Lordship.

Matrimony! How strange a dispensation seems conveyed in that momentous word, if we only consider, that of twenty couples that are paired, very often not one is matched. How many are the ties which, morally and intellectually, resemble those of the cruel Mezentius in Virgil, who chained the living to the dead! Not a few couples do we see dragging along the road of life like two pointer dogs, each pulling a different way, yet going on still. Evidently, it never was intended that all the good people should come together, but rather that, on a principle of compensation, one should be the complement to the shortcomings of the other. Lady Oxton was in every habit as different from her Lord as a bird from a fish: there was a contrast in every line and movement. I could as readily imagine a happy union between a shorn lamb and a hedgehog, or, say, the steel-clad knight and the Queen of Beauty.

Such being my admiration for this noble lady, and such the interest, and I may say the compassion that I felt for her isolated existence, it was well—since "pity is akin to love"—that her

dignity held in awe those romantic feelings which are rarely wanting to any youthful and generous heart.

Indeed, I have not much doubt that I owe no little to this noble lady. Nothing is more improving to a man, young and ductile as I then was, than the commanding and the overpowering influence of a high-souled woman. Besides, there were no eligible young ladies about Norlands, and any choice I could have made there would have been a bad one indeed: so, if Lady Oxton had not acted platonically as a kind of condenser of my spare sighs and sympathies, I should perhaps have conjured up in my mind some fair form, endowed it with every grace and virtue, fallen in love with it, and if I also married it, I should soon have awakened to the reality of some Joanish girl, a mendacious compound of crinoline and affectation.

I left Norlands with some handsome addition to my stipulated salary at a time that Lord Oxton was in London, and without any opportunity of taking leave of her Ladyship. I was much disappointed at the time, though now I am old enough to see, that if there were no feelings of interest there were none to express, and if any existed, they were better concealed.

I have since had reason to believe that Lady Oxton could not trust herself to take leave of me, so vividly did she see in me the resemblance to her lamented Sidney.

I never saw her Ladyship again for eight years, except once in the Regent's Park, and then two years had intervened. I thought, but was not sure, she saw me. A strange kind of sensation came over me. I cast a glazed and unconscious look in the direction of the carriage. But whether her Ladyship thought I did not see her — whether she was taken by surprise or had no check-string to stop with, or whether the cares and sorrows of such a life as hers, with new objects of interest and benevolence, had not made my picture dim amidst a mental gallery of others — this I cannot tell, but it left me moody and out of conceit with myself for some days after.

CHAPTER V.

HOW I FIND A TITLE FOR ORDERS, COLLECT TESTIMONIALS, AND THE DAY IS FIXED—AND HOW THE RECTOR'S WIFE FOUND HERSELF A GENTEEL "MAID-OF-ALL-WORK."

WHERE can be the use of them? "Those tiresome advertisements! Only to fill up the newspaper! Does anybody ever think of reading them?"

This is what most persons have thought as they opened the *Times* in the days of their inexperience. But, if you would know your mistake, step with me into a certain shop in the Strand, and observe that pale and careworn man who has just paid his twopence for one cup of coffee and a sight of those advertising columns. See how he is fingering down each page, to ascertain if there is not any sort of situation that will possibly suit him; he has been brought up to *nothing*, so hopes to find some place where he can "make himself *generally* useful;" or, perhaps, as a plucked Oxonian once said to me, he is looking for something under Government—some appointment in the "Woods and Forests," because he is only fit for *out-of-door work*.

Clerical newspapers now had a new interest for me.

Advertisements, sacred or profane, whether to serve in the Lord's house or to serve in a private family, are equally a dry matter of fact, and often equally ridiculous to read. We find advertised—"*Cook* good," "*Cook* plain," "*Cook* professed," "*Cook* with kitchen-maid—can milk a cow—or wouldn't object to wash at home." But all this has a parallel in "*Curate*, with sole charge" (just like cook to a widower, or where there is no mistress); "*Curate*, views Evangelical," or views like Hooker, *nearly*—this *nearly* I always suspect to be a loophole in case of any question categorical; and sometimes we read "*Curate*, views moderate," or "no extreme views," which generally means extremely ready to adopt any views of any Rector. Sometimes I read of a "*Curacy, near the sea*," or "where duty is light." Of course all this may

provoke a sneer, or a smile; but why a man worn out perhaps by a cure of 5000 souls, or why a man who is too strong-minded to take the chance of a silly Rector's interference, or why a man with delicate lungs, should not severally advertise for something suitable to their respective cases, I cannot understand. Still, my friends, when you do advertise, I would ask you to consider how your advertisement will sound to the vulgar, and to express your wants with care and caution, remembering the blunder of the Irish clergyman who had dropped the mere notes of his sermon—"Lost, by the Rev. Patrick O'Sullivan, his sermon, which can be of no possible use to any one but its owner."

As to clerical advertisements, some few are a scandal to the Church. Granted that a clergyman may follow the windings of a rippling brook, and may write all the better sermons, and see men and things through a medium the more healthful, because he occasionally woos Nature in all the freshness of her new spring fashions, and like good Izaak Walton, "doth dearly love to go a-fishing;" granted that, while he whirls his twelve yards of line around his head, he describes a magic circle, within which no dark phantom of the brain can enter; and, granted that he may piously prefer a curacy where he can enjoy these happy hours—nevertheless, is that any reason he should be so far indifferent to all appearance of evil as to advertise—"Wanted a Curacy near a good trout-stream;" or that he should walk through his parish with a hat swarming with fancy flies?

I soon discovered that a title for orders, a limited charge, where a deacon—unable, of course, to administer the Holy Communion—is eligible, is hard to find; and I am sorry to confess that, in my case, as in many others, some very hard bargains were attempted.

One Rector said at once, "My curacy is only 60*l.* a-year, I allow; here, still, you have the 60*l.* in honest cash; there is no set-off for reading with you for Priest's Orders; there are no pupils to teach into the bargain, and no worn-out furniture to rent at double its proper value." But this Rector was a man in easy circumstances, who thus epitomised the shabby tricks to which, in other cases, I heard men plead—"My poverty but not my will consents."

"'Shabby tricks!' do you say? What an admission! What a reflection on your brother-clergymen!"

Come, let us reason together, my good friend. If clergymen are undoubtedly more generous than other mortals—and this every subscription-list attests, and every beggar, when he sees a white cravat, pays us the compliment to act upon—why am I

recreant in painting clerical infirmities truthfully as they are? With all other servants, it is an axiom that an indispensable security for liberal and upright conduct is such an income as raises a man above temptation. But, a poor parson's honesty is too often exposed to the strain of every decent feeling pulling one way, while conscience edges the other. I happen to have a story to the point. *Ex uno omnia:* from this one case make allowance for all.

The Rev. Edward Hawkins wanted a Curate, and advertised that he "would give a title:" which is as much as to say, very little besides. Sixty pounds a-year the law would compel him to give, but where those sixty pounds were to come from was the difficulty. He commenced life as a Cambridge tutor, with a small and a very fluctuating estate in "reading men." He was once at Lynton in North Devon with a reading-party, and as it was too chilly for bathing, and the streams too low for fishing—after he had run over the gamut of shrimps, donkeys, valley of rocks, and pic-nic parties, till his energies obstinately refused to feed on such insipidities any longer—he chanced to meet with Miss Anna Dorkin, whose father was vainly trying to forget the Stock-Exchange mysteries of Backwardation, Continuation, and Contango, in a straw hat and linen jacket.

Before long these energies aforesaid, "cabined, cribbed, confined" in a romantic breast and narrow lodgings, I can fancy cried out, "Now, here's a chance for us! Some charms the lady has—imagination must oblige us by making up all deficiencies, and there will be something for us to do till October term, at all events."

The reader knows what is coming. We will pass over those anxious days of early courtship, when—the lady fears no proposal—the gentleman fears no acceptance—and the parents fear no provision. Matrimony, they say, is the door that leads deluded couples back to earth; but, before that point is reached, haggling about the settlement has a strong earthly savour, and the lawyer's office, no doubt, helped to settle their love with a cold collation of pence and prudence, and the bodily maintenance and education even of little Hawkinses yet unborn.

The young people thought they could live on anything, if they were only once linked together: but, the old people thought of coals and candles—rent and taxes—soap and soda: and, Mr. Dorkin characteristically maintained that, amidst all the trials of this mortal world, there was no such consolation as con*sols:* so, Edward Hawkins was obliged to wait till his fellowship led to a living.

Half the Fellows in —— College vegetated in the same unsettled

state, the College founders having forgotten that, to promote learned leisure, there is nothing between a marriage-vow on the one hand and a vow of celibacy on the other. It is far better to let a man be married than to let him be only engaged; for, a lady in a man's head is like a pike in a trout-hole, soon making rout of everything else. At last, the living of Haverdill fell to the lot of this faithful lover. It was worth 400*l.* a-year nominally, but netted little more than 300*l.* His wife had another hundred, the proceeds of a settlement of 3000*l.* in the hands of trustees, who were so hard-hearted that neither furniture, doctor's bills, a piano-forte, nor any of the old excuses for selling out part of the capital, could draw forth any other reply than a lawyer's negative, and bill for the same at Christmas.

Time went on, and the expenses of Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins went on too. The first child screwed them tight, the second tighter, the third tightest. Two others followed so fast that the cradle and baby-clothes were never cold. What was to be done? The family would increase, but the income wouldn't. Master Teddy began boy's life with a lively blue jacket and trowsers and bright buttons, the cloth being found by the tailors; but, ever since, he had known nothing but his father's black or pepper-and-salt, threadbare, with the white seams cut out; and the wife once said in my hearing, as she looked at her black silk gown, "This breadth is sacred to the memory of old Ackerley, and this breadth was a second-class funeral, and this was Mrs. Jenkins's hatband—I am quite a Mrs. Undertaker."

But, a periodical supply of some of the last year's fashions from the well-to-do members of her family brightened up the little girls wonderfully. When I see costly material in such positions, I know it is never bought, and soon detect the seams and creases. What with mending at home and making at home, Mrs. Hawkins might have sung the *Song of the Shirt.*

Necessity is proverbially contriving. She observed that the Charity-school wanted needlework, and the elder girls also wanted training. Here was at once a capital plan to save wages; only, it was a plan that caused more labour and more superintendence for the already hard-worked wife. Cheap things are always bad. The cheap nurse might run the baby's head against the door-post. The cheap nurse might let its head hang over on her arm, and once she positively dabbed the little innocent down in the damp mowing grass, "only while she was giving Harry Johnson something for his impudence."

If the poor woman had all the fag of head nurse up-stairs, the

Charity-school official down-stairs, not knowing the duster from the pudding-cloth, added all the anxieties of head cook; and when it was also baking-day or washing-week, her troubles came so thick upon her that the late Miss Anna Dorking found she was actually reduced from the listless belle of Woking Common to a country maid-of-all-work. Never mind, my dear, it cannot be helped, for many another clergyman's wife is a maid-of-all-work too.

The husband also had his troubles: for, besides a daily struggle to make both ends meet, he had also the education of Master Teddy. Master Teddy knew of every wedding and every funeral sooner than his father, and greeted each with equal glee, as auguring one school hour less. In course of time the mother saw that either Teddy must run riot or the parish. The father's nerves could not possibly stand the fret of both: so, he advertised for two things: first, for the son of some nobleman or gentleman to educate with his own—in other words, for a quiet pony to run in harness with a noted kicker—and, secondly, for a curate. Now, supposing the said curate were asked to board and eat out his salary, or supposing he agreed to teach Master Teddy into the bargain, please to say who was to blame? One of the school of Malthus or of Martineau would maintain that he ought to have thought of all this before he had the six children: only, it does seem to me that that Providence which throws a veil over the future hardly designs that man should see so very far beyond. Patience requires a sphere for its exercise in this world as well as prudence, and surely there can be no such discipline as this balancing of duties—no such self-denial as when a good-hearted fellow feels a wife and family checking the hand his generosity would instinctively hold forth.

I had much correspondence before I was promised, as a title, the curacy of Yatton, at 70*l.* a-year. One chance I lost of a curacy at 80*l.*, because I could not declare that I was decidedly Evangelical. The man who had the boldness to make this profession—so truly Pharisaic when made not in admiration of another, as a Simeon or a Cecil, but modestly of one's self—has left an impression never to be erased from my mind. "Next Sunday, my brethren," said the Rector, "I shall introduce to you a minister who will preach the deeper mysteries of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Next Sunday the gentleman did preach—thanks to my friend the under-sheriff for not executing a writ of *capias* on the Saturday—but, on the Monday he was lodged in the debtors' *side* of Leicester gaol. "Why, surely, you had as much right to

call yourself Evangelical as a scapegrace like him!" said the lawyer. I know now that Evangelical is the admitted name of a party; but the term always seemed to me an unhappy one, as an implied un-Christianising of other persons.

So far I was gradually approaching the momentous hour of Ordination: and, since there are persons who think too little care is taken in making choice of fit persons for that holy office, I would call attention to all the safeguards by which that choice is fenced about.

1st. College testimonials and a B.A. degree were required. This is a twofold evidence of fitness: it showed, first, that some 1500*l.* had been spent in giving me the best of all education; and, secondly, that those who spent it thought me worthy so high a venture.

2dly. Testimonials were required from three clergymen, all beneficed (so of fair standing), and countersigned by their Bishop as men worthy of credit, to the effect that they had severally watched and approved my conduct for three years.

3dly. A *Si quis* was required; that is, a notice duly given in my parish church of my intention to be a candidate for Holy Orders, challenging any person to inform the Bishop of any impediment.

Some persons, no doubt, are impatient to reply, that this wild man at College received testimonials notwithstanding, while all cried "Shame!" But the question is, Who is to blame? Certainly not the Clergy, who thus call for notice of unfit and unworthy persons, but rather the lay members of the Church, who forget the solemn duty of stating the impediments of which they afterwards complain. When any scandal arises in the Church, the cry is, "What are the Bishops about?" Say rather, What are the laity about, in not giving the Bishop information? It were just as sensible to cry, What are the judges about? when a felony is committed.

"And pray how does this system of selection work?" I will join issue on that point. It works wonderfully well. Set down the names of the first twenty clergymen around you, and range them side by side in vertical columns with the first twenty lawyers, doctors, officers, or country gentlemen, and then say if the Church is not filled by the best men in the land. If society is sometimes shocked, how rarely is it shocked by any clerical *faux pas*, considering that not only every Radical paper is trumpet-tongued against us all, but, added to this, Low Church hits every blot in High Church, and High Church is equally "pained to point out" the shortcomings of her erring sister, Low!

But where was I? I remember, I was collecting my papers for the Bishop. "Here's a bit of red tape from your father's secretary," said my mother. "One—two—three. First, College character; secondly, character from three clergymen; and that Mr. Rodwell was himself, though a good man now, no great things at your age. I well remember that. Thirdly, that queer-named paper——"

"My *Si quis*, mother?"

"Well, your *Si quis*. Now don't lose any of them, you careless boy. Put them in this large envelope, and post them without more delay to Mr. Stiles.

"But all this seems so strange to me, I can't believe it. I can hardly fancy you in the pulpit. Why, my dear, only the other day it seems you were in the cradle. I often think of what that impertinent Mrs. Nickson said to our Rector about young Jeffson, whom all the parish had traced up from a baby,—short-coating, breeching, tailed coat, and all:—'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings with a vengeance, Mr. Rector!' Nurse Parsons said she wished you were to be minister of a parish near home. To hear you the first Sunday, she would walk ten miles. You were such a beautiful baby, she said: and so you were, my dear."

All this is no bad argument for seeking a title far from the place of "your rearings."

At last my papers were duly sent, and acknowledged by the Bishop of——, after some preliminary correspondence with his secretary, and a day was appointed for the candidates to appear before his Lordship for examination.

This was coming to the point, indeed.

"On Sunday, the 16th of March, our dear boy is to take Holy Orders! Goodness me!" said my mother.

"Master Harry'll be a parson afore Easter," echoed Thomas below-stairs.

Every one who came to the back-door, and every one who came to the front—Mrs. Nickson, who dealt in morning gossip, and Dame Pullen, who dealt in eggs and chickens—all felt a splash and a ripple in the stagnant waters of their quiet existence in being the first to hear and the first to tell "a real good bit of news this time."

All this made me doubly nervous. What if, after all, I should be plucked? Horrible! All this parish will be gaping for the news; and, worse and worse, my mother has promised a supper in the kitchen, and tea and muffins at the alms-house, the day her dear boy is announced as ordained!

Dr. Wilson's bands were borrowed as a pattern, and several pairs were made and taught to lie in state in a little book of black silk, lined with white—a present from Ellen Horley; and when my sisters had also finished a black velvet sermon cover, the reality of the momentous life before me more and more vividly broke upon my mind.

Six weeks passed in a kind of intermittent fever of anxious and almost desperate study: "Suppose I should be asked to give the dates of the Epistles?" "Suppose if I should be set, 'Jeremiah, his life and times;' or, perhaps, 'the Journeys of St. Paul,' to trip me up; or, it may be, 'the Temple and its history, from the days of the Tabernacle to the days of Titus?'"—Such were my waking and my noonday thoughts; and what made me yet more nervous was, that every one would talk of my passing as a thing of course, just because Jacob Holden had got ordained with very little brains, and the last curate, who, everybody said, had no brains at all!

Jamque dies aderat—the day came at last. Nervous or not nervous, prepared or not prepared, the tide of Time will rise inexorably, whether we are to sink or swim; and, while I had ever so many an analysis not finished, and ever so many weak points still undefended (what candidate ever yet had not?), I found myself, with five others, in the same anxious state, booked by the same coach for the cathedral town of P——.

CHAPTER VI.

OUR ORDINATION PARTY—TALK AND CHARACTERS, VARIOUS AND ORIGINAL—THE CURATE'S ADVENTURES IN QUEST OF A PROPER TONE OF VOICE—MY FIRST ATTEMPT—THE MODEL OLD MAID.

Some thirty young men reached P—— on the Wednesday evening, and made, in two divisions, common cause and *table d'hôte* at the inns till the following Monday. Nearly every man had the questions of some late examination, those of P—— being especially creased and worn. One thing greatly reassured us all. Some of the party had been examined the year before for Deacon's orders, and they informed us that the kind and considerate Bishop had remarked that he made a point of forming some opinion of every candidate before he placed him on his list, to obviate anything so painful to a young man and his family as being sent back. Still every man had a story to relate of some pluck of recent occurrence in another diocese. "Why," said Medwyn, "my brother's bishop plucked Ned Tonkin of Brasennose for priest's orders, and Tonkin was by no means a stupid fellow; men of half his sense passed the same time."

"Perhaps that came of taking it too easy," said Currant. "A coach, I always say, is never upset at a steep pitch like Collett's bottom, or at a spinning turn even at the foot of a hill; but you will find it always happens from carelessness on a smooth road."

Matt. Currant was a character. For seven long years he had gone, ay, and often *driven*, between Loughborough and Cambridge —a man of many plucks. He had also been sentenced to three years' probation between College and Holy Orders. At last the Bishop's conscience allowed him, after much inquiry and some lengthened interviews, to say, "I am willing to ordain you to be your father's curate. The old gentleman's infirmities demand a curate; and, as he says, they also endanger your prospects for life if you are not in a position to take the family living."

Neither was it unbecoming a bishop to deem a family living a case in which any capricious refusal of Holy Orders would be the height of injustice. The case is commonly this: Mr. Currant's ancestor had a hundred acres of good land, called Cullingworth. Had he handed Cullingworth down to his heirs, with a square house and stables, Master Matt., good or bad, would have been squire of Cullingworth, without asking leave or license of any one. But the said ancestor built a church on the estate, instead of the supposed square house and stables, and settled the land to maintain a parson for that church; and then he left the Cullingworth estate, with the church, to his family, just as he would have done with no church at all. The only difference was, that Cullingworth thenceforth required not a squire, but a parson; and therefore to refuse to make Matt. a parson, "only because," as he said, "he was the best whip in and out of Cambridge, and got plucked once or twice," was the same in effect as to deprive him of his patrimony. This was a line of argument in which practice had made Matt. pretty perfect. Accordingly, we amused ourselves one evening by drawing him out. He was a pleasant fellow, and he argued very logically that, supposing his great-great-grandfather should have, as it were, "a day rule," and be let for one day out of his ancient prison-house, and supposing that "this fine old English gentleman, all of the olden time," could stand up and plead his own cause with a modern bishop, that then his respected ancestor would probably speak as follows:—

"Now, Mr. Bishop, if our boy Matt. is positively too wild for a proper parson, make the same appear, and I will honestly own that Cullingworth was never meant for him. The fair question is, 'Can you say that Matt. is below the average standard of his day? Can you fill up some 12,000 livings, all with better men than our Matt.?' I think not. But, if the most you can answer is, 'He isn't as good as we could wish him to be, and so you have a fancy to refuse him;' why, then, Mr. Bishop, before I go back to my damp corner in Cullingworth churchyard, let me tell you, small encouragement is there for any gentleman to build churches and endow livings, and ——"

"Well," interrupted Atkins, "if I were the Bishop aforesaid, I should answer my dusty old-fashioned visitor, and say, 'I know an experienced pastor and effective preacher, a better man by far for Cullingworth rectory, though not half so pleasant a fellow to do the honours of Cullingworth Hall, and the cause of the Gospel requires that I should appoint him."

"Then," said Matt., "I should just have answered pretty

quickly through my lanthorn jaws, and said, 'The cause of the Gospel you speak of requires—nothing more so—common honesty; and if I had settled the best land in Cullingworth as a prize for perfect parsons, at a bishop's choice, the case were different. But I had too much sense for that, let alone love for my kith and kin, and I did no such thing. No; I left the lands to my heirs for ever, with the church, as I might have done without one. All I gave you, Mr. Bishop, was a veto on any of my heirs who should prove a bad one,—and don't, pray, put on that veto too strong, with an honest lad like our Matt."

This reply caused no little merriment. Then Acheson observed, "Since livings, then, comprise two things,—a piece of secular, and often private family property, besides a spiritual charge,—certainly, we ought to thank the founders of livings for limiting their estates to such descendants only as could take orders, and not complain because they did not devise these estates to the most deserving of the clergy at large; but had they devised them to the bishops in trust as positive prizes of merit——"

"You think that would have been an improvement, do you?" rejoined Mullens. "I don't; and I lately heard that question so well argued that I am only thankful things remain as they are. Now suppose one of us had a dozen livings to fill up by merit to-morrow, how should we proceed? First of all, we should appoint the best men of our own acquaintance, having more confidence in them than in strangers. These would be few indeed, and some would have livings already. After this we must trust to recommendations and testimonials, when, of course, quiet sterling merit would have a poor chance in jostling with the crowd. Besides, what a premium for eye-service and hypocrisy would this involve! On the principle, *de non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio*, men's deeds would be done to be seen of bishops. A High-Church diocese would foster High-Church doctrines; a Low-Church diocese would blight all but Low. You would not find the right men in the right places more frequently than at the present, but jealousy and heartburnings would spread like a plague."

I was glad to hear so good an answer to the old remark, that preferment is not, as it should be, awarded solely by merit, in our Church. Some persons indulge in visions of a time when every bishop shall hold every living in his diocese at command, and distribute, without favour or partiality, to the most devoted of the clergy. This, like other Utopian theories, unfortunately, requires not only perfect justice, but universal knowledge.

Preferment by merit comes at last to preferment to apparent,

and perhaps, ostentatious merit. Oh, what a blighting influence would be shed by that temptation "to be seen of men," which such a system would involve! We should learn to act as under the eye of an earthly master only: and every time a living was vacant, or an appointment made, feverish anxiety and heart-burnings would paralyse the industry of all around.

Such a system would be most demoralising to the body of the clergy, and would create an increasing number of those worst of servants, "disappointed men." Many an old naval officer, far from enjoying his pension or half-pay, frets and fumes away his last years in misery and discontent, till his friends are sick of hearing about "mere boys promoted, and his long service forgotten."

Happily, we have no such gall of bitterness in the Church; though, after all, merit is rewarded as often as it would be under any other system. For, the class of men who would catch a bishop's eye—hasty and superficial as one man's glance must be over six or seven hundred parishes—would generally be the least deserving in the whole diocese. I remember an instance in which some influential members of the Evangelical party were so unguarded as to advertise for "a clergyman of decided piety." The man elected they fondly believed, and spoke of, as one too good for this evil world; but two years after, one of his enthusiastic admirers admitted, "The truth is, we have been taken in. He is no better than a canting hypocrite." So, preferment by merit might really be a premium for hypocrisy; or, at all events, for ostentation: and, a bishop would too often have cause to exclaim, with the French statesman, "*J'ai fait un ingrat et mille mécontents.*"

"Well but, Currant," I asked, "did not the Bishop intimate that he knew all about your Cambridge doings: eh?"

"Our Bishop is a regular good one, you may depend upon that, gentlemen," said Currant. "He talked most kindly, and almost brought tears into my eyes. He said, 'Now, Mr. Currant, I am very happy, indeed, to be able to say that I have made up my mind about the general bent of your character. I believe you are one who will feel the full weight of this new and awful responsibility; for, when a man feels like a parent watched on all points by his own children, it is indeed a great help—a providential stimulus to propriety of demeanour and true pastoral conduct.'"

"There he hit the very joint of the matter," said Williamson, who was to be ordained a Priest. "I could not have believed how altered I should feel—what a salutary check and restraint would come over me—as I walked about the parish after the first.

Sunday. Really, I felt as if I were voted the sworn pattern of all propriety, and I must be a bad fellow indeed not to act up to it."

Currant.—"Well, and his Lordship said, 'I would advise as to your recreations; for (smiling) I think you used to be fond of —— Yes, I did hear of a coach upset.' 'Then, my Lord,' I said—for, I couldn't stand that for a minute—'you have heard what is not true. It was Bateman of Trinity, and not I, who upset the Monarch that time. I never in my life upset——' 'Never mind, Mr. Currant, my meaning is——' said his Lordship. 'Yes, but, my Lord, I do mind, and I can't help minding,' said I, 'and I should really wish the truth——' 'Well, well,' interrupted the Bishop, 'at all events you used to drive coaches, and I can readily believe you drove very well; for, what is more to the present purpose, you had no little practice I have understood, and——'"

"He had you there, Harry," said Bayford.

"'And now we must study appearances; indeed, appearances are all short-sighted men can judge us by, and there must be nothing seen in us at all ludicrous in the week to mar the holy associations of the Sunday.

"'Your duty is to save souls—*souls!* to turn the sinner from the evil of his ways. Fix your mind on that duty, and all your recreations will assume a clerical—let me call it a professional—form of themselves. I say professional, for this answ ersevery cavil that can be raised about whether this amusement or that is worthy of a clergyman. Lawyers and doctors know they can never command the confidence of clients or of patients without denying themselves everything of an unprofessional appearance. My friend Latham, the surgeon, tells me he must not play his violin in company. Serjeant Talfourd's advancement at the bar, I hear, has suffered even from his literary pursuits. We must be equally wise in our generation, and deny ourselves in all things unprofessional—in all that diminishes our influence. Clergymen with Proprietary Chapels, I blush to admit, have a nicer instinct of things professional—things in tone and keeping with their ministry—than many others.'"

"That they have," said Mullens; "and Hatcham, of that fashionable chapel at Westaway, for which he gave 1500*l.*, said to me, 'I am moped to death for want of shooting and fishing, and something that gives real diversion to the mind. What good does it do a man of my habits to pace from milestone to milestone, with *his aching head* as full of parish matters as if he stayed at home?

The consequence is, I am obliged periodically to go away: for, my 1500*l.* would be thrown to the winds if I were seen enjoying any field-sports. Men differ as widely from each other as hot-blooded animals differ from cold-blooded. A change in the air moves my blood about in my veins like quicksilver, whereas that poor creature at St. John's Chapel makes one doubt Harvey's theory of the circulation of the blood altogether.'"

"Why didn't he think of that," said Currant, "before he tried the fashionable chapel? In our parish of Cullingworth the people are not so particular. I may shoot and I may fish, with as little observation as walking. My father, in visiting the sick, has often said, "I'll go and shoot you a rabbit for broth, or I'll catch you one or two trout,' quite as a part of parish business; but do you know, I mustn't hunt—no, I mustn't even ride that way to see the hounds throw off. We're so near Melton, and our people have heard such tales of the Melton men and their doings, that I mustn't be mixed up with their company."

"You're right there," said Mullens. "Men should consider what they undertake. Men of studious, sedentary habits, are better suited for town parishes. I do believe, Currant, you are better adapted for Cullingworth than a steady man like Watkins—his head full of differential calculus."

"No question I am without any conceit at all. His deep notions would only puzzle them. Why, there isn't a man in our parish who ever heard of 'Calculus,' except, perhaps, the doctor. You are quite right, Mr. Mullens, about sedentary habits. Some men are more body, some more brains; some can pick up notions in the world at large, by talking to people, by observation, and the like of that. I told my father's curate, this is no place for all your learning. What good do you do studying 'the Fathers?' You had much better study the MOTHERS, and take care of the women and children of the parish."

Mullens.—"Then you are for wayside wisdom—fewer words and more work."

Currant.—"Exactly: that's my line, that is; and others can only get knowledge out of books. These men will do for an educated congregation, and for people used to books and the language of books, but their style would be an unknown tongue down at Cullingworth. But what I was coming to is, that Mr. *Brains* can find exercise in a town—a seedy-looking man can keep up his seedy looks anywhere; but Mr. *Body* can't. I say, only keep me jolly, and I can work. Now, I am to vow, if all goes right on Sunday, to teach the children, and read and look

after the 'sick, poor, and impotent folk' of Cullingworth, and at Cullingworth I can trust myself to do it. I can talk Cullingworth talk, and I know the depth of Cullingworth minds; and I can find my way in all winds and weathers over Cullingworth Common; and, please God, I'll keep my vow, and visit the poor souls like a good, honest, working parson. But then, with all this I must have air and exercise. I should die at a place like Westaway, all in buckram—forced to look all day long as if sitting for the portrait of some old lady's 'blessed minister.'"

Mullens.—"Then let it be granted that Mr. *Body* and Mr. *Brains*—that Matt. Currant and the Rev. T. S——, may all find a suitable sphere in the Church. And now, gentlemen, I propose Mr. Matt. Currant's health, and success to all his good resolutions, and may we all make as good use of our several talents as we hope and believe he will do of his. Many thanks to Mr. Matt. Currant for his good advice to place ourselves where our incitements to hard work are greatest, and our distractions least. A reading man—in Cullingworth, say—might err by what was aptly termed the *insidious dissipation of the study*, and Mr. Matt. Currant might find that he was working against the stream of his nature, instead of with it, in certain towns. I do believe this advice is much needed, and may save us all from some irretrievable mistakes in the serious life before us."

Such was the kind of conversation, always amusing, and often very clever and very edifying, which filled up the hours of breakfast, dinner, and tea, during the four happy but excited days of my examination for Deacon's orders.

Matt. Currant—"the Reverend Matthew" now—I do believe most honestly keeps his vow, and, having settled down in a parish as rude as himself, is as useful in his generation as many a man of more refinement and fewer plucks. What though he seem to us rather rough and unpolished? Put back the clock of time a hundred years, and Matt. is as polished as the best, and so far can do God's work as well. What though he is akin to Friar Tuck, with ruddy cheeks and spirits up to proof? It pleased the Almighty to make him such: so, why give way to the common prejudice that the pale and the cadaverous is the only cast of features becoming to the clergy? Habitual gloom, like sworn celibacy for a devoted ministry, has some show of reason at first thoughts, but nature soon bursts through fictitious bonds, and reminds us that ministers are only men. On this point I dwell, because the cause of the Gospel is injured by the unreasonable *expectations* formed of the clerical character.

Sir R. Peel wisely remarked, that nothing is gained by treating the clergy as if we expected of them "superhuman zeal and virtue," though instances of self-sacrifice are not wanting; and that the result of denying the clergy all secular interests and even natural feeling, would be "to create a set of lazy, worthless, and cloistered hypocrites."

Yes, hypocrites! Frown on a clergyman for seeming what he is; cut him off from the sympathy of his fellows if he does not wear a look of ten times more sanctity than any layman ever dreams of, and by degrees he will assume a face to suit you, and, ere long, the inner man will learn the deceitfulness of the man without.

But why should you expect perfection in flesh and blood, although the same flesh and blood happens to belong to a minister of the Gospel? Were the ministers of our blessed Lord's own choice and selection faultless?

One contest there is, and one contest there ever will be, never to cease till the grave has closed upon this mortal body. The best Christian warrior is he who perseveres and continues this contest unto the end. Every appetite and every instinct, however indispensable for our very existence in this life, tends to excess, and is in itself a snare. Prudence freezes into Heartlessness; Industry sharpens into Covetousness; and Charity treads upon the heels of Justice. All this is felt by ministers as well as other men. Enough is it if the clergy are more especially on their guard; but how senseless to expect, amidst all the cravings of humanity, such utter apathy that all natural feelings should be strangers to the breast!

We should never forget that hypocrisy is a habit which must naturally result from pursing up our features and "mincing as we go," to suit a standard of propriety tyrannically imposed. An unreasonable demand for piety and perfect virtue, as for other things, will ever stimulate a spurious supply. If you will require more sugar than the grocer can afford, you must expect to have your mouth full of sand.

But, unfortunately, a mistaken public opinion has cut out one mould for all faces clerical, and a jolly Matt. Currant is expected to look as gloomy, he once complained, "as a sympathetic undertaker in a good run of business." Do not suppose I mean that childish levity is consistent with serious duty while duty lasts; but only that we must sometimes let the bow unbend. Even the merry Matt. Currant's instincts have taught him that, and no little to his own surprise. — "You should have seen me," said Matt., "when we

had the typhus and the famine at Cullingworth both at the same time. What with running about from one end of our common to the other, regular bog-trotting, to visit the sick and weighing out charity potatoes between whiles, I had not a laugh belonging to me for three weeks together—I hadn't, really."

Our examination lasted Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. It consisted of papers of questions, to which we wrote answers for the chaplain, and each of us was called out in turn to translate some Greek Testament to the Bishop in his study. This gave his Lordship an opportunity of speaking words in season to each of us. He spoke to me very feelingly of my duty, and impressed the truth that the Apostles were men, not of words, but works—that our Lord "went about doing good," led a life of personal attention, and Christian activity, and usefulness. "And when," said the good Bishop, "I hear so much of controversy and pretended zeal for the clearest shade of truth in words and tenets, and that in men not more strict than their neighbours about truth in practice, I cannot help suspecting the guile of the tempter to indulge intellectual pride, to delude men with the fancy that a keen mind will atone for a dull heart."

This lecture formed one more topic of our after-breakfast discussions. Some of our party represented High Church, and some Low. It may seem satirical to remark it—still, true it is—that any such examination question as "Defend High-Church doctrines," or, "Defend Low-Church doctrines from Scripture, and by common sense," that this would have plucked more than one doughty champion on each side. But never mind. In religion as in politics, if no man were allowed to have any opinion without knowing why or wherefore, country dinner-parties would become yet more stupid than they are.

"I would ask Mr. Mullens," said Currant,—"if I may allude to the good Bishop's advice to Mr. Austin—Don't you allow that there is a deal of pretence about doctrines? Low Church we see looking stiff and cold at High Church, and High Church we see edging away to the other end of the table, for fear of being expected to take a glass of wine with Low; when, all the time, the state of their parishes too often shows they had better both of them mend their manners first and their minds afterwards—too much theory, too little practice!"

To this the whole table agreed; and Mullens, to give a more lively turn to the argument, amused us all by a certain story from Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World* which deserves to be better *known*.

"A bloated, profligate character, evidently the worse for liquor, was standing under the window of a prison and talking politics with a gaol-bird behind the bars. "Never was such a thing," said the gaol-bird; "our *liberties* are in danger!" "What I's most concerned about," replied the *drunkard with an oath*, "is our blessed religion."

I often think of this story when I hear a proud, overbearing fellow talking Radicalism, or a man, whose whole life is a heresy, quarrelling about orthodoxy.

By the Friday evening we had each been examined by the Bishop, and knew by his manner that we were certain to pass.

"Can I take any message home, gentlemen?" asked the coachman, standing at the inn door, "to say you are safe to have your names in the way-bill, or the like o' that?"

"Yes, coachman," I replied, "if you see my mother, or any of our people about the road, just say that my message is to 'order the muffins,' that's all; they will understand my meaning."

"Oh! I can guess, sir," said the coachman. "You are to give a teatotal treat on the occasion. All right, sir; I'll set the news going."

On the Saturday, after merely a formal examination for half-an-hour to pass away the time, we met in the hall to make the usual subscriptions, under the direction of Mr. Stiles, the Bishop's secretary.

This lawyer was a quizzical-looking man, and as we were all in high spirits some of us looked to see how Currant's risible faculties would be affected. "To subscribe to the Articles am I, Mr. Stiles?" said Matt. "I think I've subscribed enough already. Something like ten shillings a-head did they cost me for tutoring before I was safe to come here."

Whereupon he took the pen from the last candidate, and, having signed the register, he turned round to Harry Hampton, who was to be ordained as chaplain to a lunatic asylum—a strange charge for a beginner, but so it was—and said,—

"Now, Mr. Lunatics, I'll hand the pen to you next. Your congregation, with their heads shaved, will be extra particular about the Thirty-nine Articles, there is no doubt."

Really his way of saying such things was so natural to the character of an unpolished countryman, that it was very hard not to laugh; but one or two of the party suggested the Bishop might enter the room and be displeased at this merriment, and we ought to remember where we were.

Mr. Stiles then said,—"You will all dine with his Lordship

to-day. At six o'clock, gentlemen, I hope to meet you there. Eleven o'clock to-morrow is the hour of service in *our* Cathedral. Bring your own surplices, if you happ en to have any with you; it is often hard matter to make ours go round."

"How are we to be dressed?" asked one stylish-looking man. "Thin shoes and silk stockings, some one has told me."

"*I* shall put on double-thick soles and worsted stockings," said Mr. Stiles, antithetically. "Bless me, sir! I wouldn't insure your life for a trifle in our office, if you don't take more care of it than that. Why, our Cathedral's one degree colder than an ice-house. Button up, gentlemen, button up warm, by all means. It is very lucky you asked me. You might catch your death o' cold—yes, death o' cold. But, hush! here comes the Bishop, with a book full of good advice: *so*, of course, it is time for *me* to be off!"

The Bishop then entered to deliver his customary address to the Candidates for Holy Orders.

The good Bishop's advice was very plain and practical—about "saving ourselves," and, as a consequence, "them that hear us"—that half our doubts and short-comings arose from the want of personal piety—from not seeking the kingdom of God *first*—from not putting our duty always *first*, for then recreations and all secular interests would fall harmoniously into their proper places. He said that the same was the principle of all effective preaching. When the minister's heart was with his people, when he yearned that they might be saved—then, becoming feelingly sensible of their wants and temptations during the week, the natural result on the Sunday would be a subject well chosen, as also that only eloquence which is worth anything—the spontaneous expression of a heart in true sympathy with the hearer. How precisely was this kind of preaching expressed by the Psalmist:—"My heart was hot within me, and while I was thus musing the fire kindled, and at the last spake I with my tongue!"

I left the hall full of hope and resolution. If any words of man, aided by every hallowed association, could have graven, as with an iron pen, on my rocky heart for ever—or rather, could have written indelibly on the shifting sands of man's wavering mind—those words on that memorable fifteenth day of March, undoubtedly had done so.

We all walked quietly away. Matt. Currant was not one whit less subdued than the rest. As we entered our common room, the first man who approached the easy chair flung himself

listlessly into it; and another seemed, with one consent, to be considered lucky to have been first on the sofa. Even young men feel the nervous effects of long excitement, and that peculiar "creeping down the spine," never more felt, in my recollection, than at that hour, which marked how all our hopes and fears had been wound up to a certain point, and had then been as suddenly unstrung.

Luncheon made us all ourselves again. We then dispersed, and rode or walked to see the country, and to allow our tumultuous feelings time to cool. But first, nearly every man asked about the post-time, and every man had just a few lines he must write, "if it were only to say he would write again to-morrow." Some wrote to their fathers and mothers; and one at least, to my certain knowledge, wrote to a lady fair, increasing, no doubt, her breathless anticipations of snug parsonage, village queen, rural innocence, and all as nice as in Wilkie's pictures. Yes, and two days after more than one started, as he received an answer, superscribed in full with "The Reverend ——." Ay, and I must own, one at least was guilty of the weakness of scribbling his own name with his new dignity attached—as young ladies do when the wedding-cards are ordered—just to see how it would look. All this is very unlike an ideal minister, no doubt: but by no means unlike that mixture of greatness and littleness, of weakness and of strength, that marks the creature man, whom "God made perfect,"—"yet hath he found out many devices."

I walked a circuit of seven or eight miles with a very good man, who had been ordained Deacon the year before, and who now was taking Priest's orders. There was also another candidate like myself. This companion talked with me in a free and sanguine strain of our plans and intentions, presuming—as all such plans do presume—that our future parishioners were mounted on patent castors, and could be pushed about anywhere; and we invested all our unknown parishioners—as parents their unborn children—with all the ways and feelings we wished them to have.

While we were going on creating a little world of our own, our more experienced friend kept dropping hints, we should find it hard to people it. Our plans for schools he qualified by mention of bird-keeping to abstract the boys, and baby-minding to divert the girls. Then, our idea that we could assign such and such hours for house-to-house visiting was met with suggestions of cottage habits—of women washing in the morning, and men tired and hungry from the plough in the evening. "You'll learn

their habits by degrees," he said; "little can be done without considering them. A young curate next parish to me could not understand that milking cows was not a mere excuse for Sabbath-breaking, and asked the farmer if the women couldn't just as well put off the milking to the Monday? 'That would be a very bad job for the cows,' said Farmer Wyatt."

By six o'clock we were all assembled in the Bishop's drawing-room. As for a Bishop's wife and family, and the idea of dining with a Bishop, these incidents of his mortal state seemed to take me by surprise. I did not know what to expect, and said as much to Currant. Matt. being born with that part of his skull which should swell with the bump of veneration about as smooth as your hand, and who was innocent of all kind of sentiment, replied, "Ay, I understand you; you've never seen a live Bishop, you mean: but now there's a good opportunity for you; for I quite agree with Mr. Wombwell, that there is 'nothing like feeding-time, gentlemen, for animals of all sorts, to see them as they are.'"

But I, on the contrary, had always felt a distant awe of so sacred a character. I had, in childhood, seen one in pure white marble, and had connected it with the angels of the seven churches. But fancy must yield to fact, and I must say that a dinner of many courses, taking glasses of wine with his Lordship, and peeling hot chestnuts, would disenchant us as soon as anything.

Arrived at the palace, a mortal footman below-stairs passed me on to an equally mortal footman up, and I was taken by the hand by a good, easy-mannered, elderly gentleman, with a silk apron, who began talking of the fatigues of the examination and the country walks we had explored. Here was evidently a good Christian man—a purer vessel for the heavenly treasure could hardly be supposed of "earth;" but still I felt a transient feeling of disappointment—though reflection soon scattered it to the winds—to find it was earthy still. His Lordship had several daughters: one was the wife of the Chaplain, and some one was inquiring after her baby. All these daughters wore stiffening, extra gathers, ornaments, and all the killing implements of man-slaughter found in the armoury of other ladies. Little tubby Mr. Stiles was standing like a china jar in the middle of the bow-window, and was surmounting the usual difficulties of one conscious that he is not quite "drawing-room company," by passing away the time with the Bishop's sons.

Two fine boys, from Rugby, were describing to the man of

law the netting of a rabbit-warren, and were asking whether "the governor" would be above letting them have a crack at the rooks which were cawing in those old and sacerdotal elms. Then, the piano and music-books, tidies on the ottomans, a dish of visiting-cards, a chess-table, and all the usual appliances of a gentleman's house, made me think, "Why, this is only like Norlands!—taste, etiquette, and such sublunary trifles are here considered, neither more nor less—and why not?" Men of refinement naturally live as such.

The ladies did not dine with us. His Lordship carried on a general conversation with some seven or eight who sat near him. Those in the middle of the table radiated towards the Chaplain; and thus, between the greater fountain of honour and the less, some twenty men enjoyed that flattering excitement and that pleasing sense of self-importance for which so many endure hot rooms and headaches, under the name and notion of "genteel society," though utterly incapable of much enjoyment.

Matt. Currant and a few others, who were very well aware that they had no odds and ends from Church Magazines to venture sententiously like the gentleman aforesaid, clustered round Mr. Stiles, who was carving at the bottom of the table. This little coterie drank, *sotto voce*, toasts of their own, voting Mr. Stiles the exact representative of Church and State, or a *mixta persona*, both lay and ecclesiastical. After a while, a rather too jovial laugh was heard from this little party; it numbered about four in all. We must not be too censorious; four rather thoughtless fellows out of thirty we can allow in this world of sin and foibles. This laugh made the Chaplain and men of better taste cast admonitory glances down the table, to make them remember where they were. Then "all was hushed:" but, before we went to bed, we heard what caused the merriment. Matt. had made an amusing riddle in honour of Mr. Stiles—"Why was Mr. Stiles," he asked, "like an amphibious animal?" and the answer was, "Because he not only did well on the land, but made a capital living out of the *see*."

However, this was an exception; the conversation generally was good and edifying. The Bishop being properly "given to hospitality," invited us to a plain but excellent dinner, showing refinement without waste; at the same time, both in the drawing-room and at table, his conversation was well chosen, and he seemed to give us all credit for being in earnest, and left nothing unsaid which could inform or encourage us.

We were not long at table. More words in season were

spoken in the drawing-room, and then Mr. Stiles gave a hint that we were expected to retire early, in order as he implied, with winks and shrugs strangely out of tone with the solemnity of the idea to be conveyed, "to have time to get serious against to-morrow."

Every one would hope and presume that there never in our lives was a night of prayer like that night, which preceded "our taking upon ourselves the office and ministration to serve God, for the promoting of His glory and the edifying of His people." But there are times when prayer is little better than a wish to pray. There are times when, though it be the most critical period of a man's life, he stands wondering that he cannot realise his position, and that, gather up as he will all the pieces of the solemn picture into the kaleidoscope of his mind, still the impressions on his feelings are but the faintest shadow of the scene. So, I doubt not, with others as with myself, the occasion was less impressive than one would suppose. It is not the first moment of death which gives the feeling that some beloved one is gone for ever: the circulation, mental as well as physical, must have time to return before the sufferer feels the anguish of his wound. So perhaps it was on this principle that the solemnity of Holy Orders rather grew upon me than came at once.

A most unsympathising and methodical old gentleman is Father Time. Sanguine though our hopes, and however reluctant our fears of any coming event, the same jog-trot pace he goes, and not one moment's respite does he grant, whether the morning bell is to toll at St. Sepulchre's for a felon's death, or to ring for a wedding at Hanover Square.

Even so the solemn morning broke at last. Time and place, 7 A.M. Inn bed-room, No. 11. "Boots," with clothes on his arm, is standing at the door; and so I awake. Is it a dream? No. Yesterday there really was a party at the Bishop's. Those white colours dangling from the looking-glass are the neatly-pressed bands my dear mother hemmed for me, and this is really the day of Ordination.

How strange is the feeling of first waking to any critical and anxious change! To awake on a fine bright morning to a day of promised pleasure, has a joyous thrill peculiarly its own. But, oh! how sad to awake to a sense of grief and pain—to find, as it were, a dark group of cares and sorrows awake before you, hovering around your restless bed, and ready, like the gaolers of the condemned, silently to remind you that you are theirs—that it is *indeed no* dream—that some heart-wrenching day has come—that

the spirit of some loved one did really depart last night, or perhaps (more agitating still), that you have hopeless inquiries to renew this morning!

Such waking hours we all have known in days of sorrow. But, I remember waking on my wedding-day and feeling, "Well, there is no messenger to put me off—the day is truly come at last. For weal or for woe, to all I fondly promise myself; to another Lady Oxton in her girlhood, or to Joe Jefson's 'dish of bitter herbs,' as he says, 'at breakfast, dinner, and tea throughout life.' I am now to commit myself. The only drawback is that named in Horace, '*vestigia nulla retrorsum*,' because 'when done it is done;' for the estate of matrimony is quite upon the rat-trap principle—very easy going one way, but next to impossible to go the other."

Akin to this were my feelings on this morning of my Ordination. How little did I feel in my own eyes! What was I to undertake! How great the calling. How sorry and insignificant the servant! To pretend to any kind of office above your proved ability is great presumption: if so, what is it to step forward into the advanced rank of those who should be patterns of every Christian virtue? "Can I keep this solemn vow?" Time alone can tell me. Yet, this day I am to venture—venture all—yes, *all*—my peace on earth and my ——

Reader, if you expect to be admitted to my inmost thoughts, and to read anything like the words in which those thoughts fly, spark-like, upwards;—or, indeed, if you have taken your ideas of piety so much from certain novels, in which holy texts seem larded *quantum suff.*—like woodcuts to meet the wishes of "the trade," and "find a lively sale;" and if you suppose a poor sinner's sense of weakness finds relief only in words articulate, or in any words he thinks of afterwards—you little know the heart of man. And here let me tell you, once for all, my soul abhors—I hope it is no unhealthy sign—as a thing the most indecent and indelicate, that uncovering of our moral nakedness, and that gloating over the sacred experiences of our inmost nature, too common in personal histories of a certain class. And therefore, when on this Sunday morning I came down to breakfast, I did not tell any one, nor did any one tell me, how they had severally prepared for that holy rite, which formed so great a crisis in the lives of all of us.

The first person who broke silence was Matt. Currant.

"This would be a deadly-lively breakfast party, I'm bold to say, Mr. Austin, if it were not for me, though I am not half up to

the mark myself; and now, no one has had the presence of mind to order the hinder legs of that fine turkey to be grilled — not half an appetite any of us! I know you'll hardly believe me, but I've done nothing else but feel a creepy sensation this last half-hour, and I have exactly the same sort of all-overishness, without making out why or wherefore, that I felt the morning my dear old mother was buried. It can't be that I'm afraid of anything — no being plucked, or the like of that — but, I feel ten times queerer than I did before the Examination, when, with bad luck, I might have been sent home to Cullingworth by Pearson's coach to set all the parish gossiping about the dunce I was!"

Of course, rough fellows like Currant are not the less subject to all the qualms and quiverings of the nervous system, neither do they feel the less ludicrously ignorant of the philosophy of their feelings. I was present at Matt.'s wedding three years after. He had the same "all-overishness," I suppose, then; for, during the ceremony he cried like a child: neither was this the only case in which I have seen Dame Nature make a big lusty fellow feel ashamed of his weakness.

The way a flood of feeling overpowers a strong man on such critical occasions, without the least expectation on his own part, is among the mysteries of our nature. It is like a seizure or blow from some power without. It seems a proof that certain positions touch the chord of certain feelings perhaps never called forth before. I have often wondered whether there may not be "a murderer's feeling,"—that is, a new sensation suddenly developed to paralyse the man who dares break into the house of life. But, be this as it may, on this most momentous occasion there was evidently a peculiar feeling and a potent spell that bound us all.

On all exciting occasions, our feelings seem so important to ourselves that we naturally expect every one around will sympathise and feel the same. But who is there that has not found, at such moments, the indifference of others jar upon his own excited feelings? So, at the anxious moment in question, the boots and the waiter bustled in and out of the room as we were putting on our bands and preparing for the Cathedral; and the waiter asked, "What the gentlemen would have to take after Ordination?" and even told us authoritatively what time we "should be out," explaining that it was likely *he* should know a little about it; for "hundreds of gents had been ordained out of the King's Head."

When any critical event is pending, there is with most of us a

superstitious feeling that it cannot be—we cannot realise it, and something must happen to prevent it. And yet, when the same event has taken place, there proves to be a degree of routine and common-place in the matter which strangely contrasts with all our anticipations. More than one of our party betrayed this prevailing sentiment by remarking, "Very like reality!" "The hour is come at last, though I can scarcely believe it." And, just as the old man—so as a child I fancied—shut up in that high grey tower moved his long and picked finger inexorably over the dial, I was drawn quite passive by the potent spell of circumstances to shape my course to that dire magician's silent bidding, and was carried with the stream into the ancient cathedral of P——.

The first thing that roused me from my reverie was that we all crowded round one of the vergers, who looked at first as if he were heavily laden with large arrears of household linen under his arm, to be handed over for a three-weeks' wash.

"The cleaner ones will soon be gone," whispered the experienced Mr. Mullens.

"I hope the wine agreed with you," said Mr. Stiles, who then came up, with his little turtle-like head emerging from the ample collar of a thick greatcoat—"Very cold—told you so—wrapped up, I hope, all of you? Come to my house, round the cloisters, after service. I shall have a jug of something hot—that's a regular thing. I have your Letters of Orders all ready to show your friends there is no mistake. I hope Mr. Currant's well."

If this little touch of earth served to break the spell that entranced my mind—if some of these precious moments, attending Holy Orders, were thus squandered on one of those mere six-and-eightpenny officials, who are generally thought to take a pretty strict tithe of holy things, the next minute I was so far secularised as to find myself almost scrambling, in my eagerness for an early pick, amongst those dirty surplices.

"Dirty, indeed! You don't say dirty?"—All I mean is, that, judged by the standard of a decent parlour-maid's apron, there wasn't one clean. The Tractarians go sometimes too far, I allow, in their anxiety, lest in our churches, what meets the eye should break the charm which fills the ear; still, it was high time some party made a stand against dirty linen at the Communion-table, greasy altar-cloths, hassocks half-disembowelled, and a race of clerks, and other attendants on solemn services, who had become a very by-word for all that is ignorant and grotesque. However, deeply regretting that I did not bring a surplice with me—my

dear mother would have ironed and smoothed one like satin with her own hands, I am very sure—I put on the best I could find, and was soon—thanks to the tracery of those vaulted aisles, the deep-toned organ, and all the hallowed associations of the Cathedral—in a frame of thought and feeling more in unison with the occasion.

The Ordination Service is after this manner:—

First of all the Chaplain addresses the Bishop sitting by the Communion-table, and says:—

"Reverend Father in God, I present unto you these persons present to be admitted Deacons."

Then the Bishop says:—

"Take heed that the persons, whom ye present unto us, be apt and meet for their learning and godly conversation, to exercise their ministry duly to the honour of God, and to the edifying of His Church."

And then the Chaplain answers, "I have inquired of them, and also examined them, and believe them so to be."

And here my thoughts recurred to my own unworthiness. A man must be worthless indeed who did not feel humbled at such a presentation.

The Bishop, on receiving this assurance from the Chaplain, appeals to the people solemnly, "in the name of God," to come forth, "if there be any that knoweth any impediment or notable crime" in any of the persons so presented.

Then, if there is no one to forbid these holy banns, the service proceeds in the usual form.

That nothing may be wanting to mark the spirit of intense earnestness which pervades the Ordination Service, the congregation is, at one part, called upon to offer up their secret prayers; and silence is preserved for several minutes, to enable every heart to pour forth its several petitions to Almighty God, to grant us strength and power to perform all these things which are vowed and promised by the candidates.

Add to this, the observance of these "old-fashioned Ember days" did positively cause, not only in England, but throughout Christendom, voices innumerable to offer up prayers for us,—yes, even for Henry Austin himself.

Thousands upon thousands have lived and died without reflecting how mighty is the machinery of our Church for striking one chord of simultaneous prayer. But, stand on the heights of Malvern, and count the many village spires—some clear and distinct in the open plain, some just peeping through the trees, or

half-embosomed in their quiet dells — and try to realise that, from every other height of England, you may descry more village spires as the natural features of our English landscape.

And, if so, consider that, at every one of those village churches from which they rise, the ear of Omnipotence might have heard a prayer for us, saying, "To those which shall be ordained to any holy function send thy grace and heavenly benediction." Ay, and in our distant colonies, in the backwoods of Canada, and the wilds of Australia and New Zealand — wherever the lonely colonist clings to his Prayer-book as a bond of sympathy and communion with the Church of his childhood, and with those time-honoured stones and long-familiar faces which mingle with the dreams of his log-built hut — even there might have been whispered a prayer for us, "Send thy grace and heavenly benediction." Yes, and move to some sea-washed cliff and see afar those swelling sails, which — outward or homeward bound, some hundreds before sunset — pass between your eye and the horizon; and think that each of these seeming bubbles on the watery plain speaks of a several family of our countrymen cradled in the furrows of the sea; and if so, even there might Christian voices have joined in the same petition, that we — yes, *we*, "might both by our life and doctrine set forth God's glory, and set forward the salvation of all men through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Sum up all the precautions already mentioned as adopted by the English Church to ensure fit persons for the ministry, and say, Can any person devise one additional precaution? Can any one improve on these measures? Surely, if there is a loophole anywhere, it consists not in the measures, but the men. If the clergy are not always as pure and devoted as we could wish to see them, where is the reformation to begin? The first step in the series must precede the second. England must have purer homes to constitute a purer University, to raise the standard of testimonials and of that public opinion that determines the propriety of the clerical character. In other words, the clergy being the cream of the laity, you cannot improve your cream any faster than your milk. The Spartan army was invincible, because the Spartan mothers were strong and noble-hearted. Even so, the Christian mothers, in their nurseries, have more to do with presenting "fit and proper persons" for the Ministry, than all the Bishops in the Church.

To continue my story. The next morning we all dispersed in different directions, like so many radii of a circle, of which this cathedral town was the centre.

Matt. Currant's last was this:—

"Now I've got these Letters of Orders," he said, as he creased down the parchment, "I do not above half know what to do with them."

"Not know what to do with them? Why, show them to your Rector, to be sure," said Edwards.

"Yes, yes, I know all about that. But I was thinking how many times I've thought of the day when I should take them home to my dear mother, and gladden her old heart with the feel of them—*feel* things is all she could do—she could not *see* for years. But there, that can't be," said he, with a sigh, at the same time smoothing his crape hat-band; "she is dead and gone first!"

A happy schoolboy can take home his prize to his mother; but, as to the rewards of later life—the honours of the lawn, the ermine, or the peerage—ask those great men who, swift as the hare, yet untiring as the tortoise, have won at last some envied prize, and they will tell you their reward has come all too late: time has not only spoiled their zest, but laid those who should have blessed them in the grave!

Happily, I was more fortunately situated than poor Currant. Coachman had met my mother walking in the road. Her maternal instincts had suggested that there might possibly be some one on the coach who knew a little of our doings.—"All right, you may depend, ma'am," said coachman. "Every old woman at the Almshouse is to drink Mr. Austin's health in her strongest cup of tea and sugar—that's my message."

So I returned home on the evening of the 19th of March, 18—, to my native village, an object of all that sympathy and cordial greeting which shows a soul of goodness in rude and rugged breasts, awaiting only a congenial touch to call it forth.

On sitting down to dinner I was startled at being called on to say grace. My mother talked incessantly about all the particulars of my examination. My father seemed only to care that the thing was done—a parson at last—in the way of preferment—he would cultivate his electioneering acquaintances more than ever—a fat living might turn up. My mother talked about the blessing my ministry might be to others; my father about "what the boy was to do for himself." My mother would talk enthusiastically about Simeon, and Venn, and Doddridge—all female piety takes a Low-Church form, if left to itself. My father's ecclesiastical biography was chiefly confined to Thwackhum and Parson Adams; and it is only fair to the senior clergy of the present day to remember, that, as to their early advantages, my

father truly represented no small part of that community among which candidates for the ministry were born and bred.

However, I felt all this was wrong. A man surrounded as my father was, by his own acres and a few sleepy neighbours in the country, succeeds as naturally to the prejudices as to the fortune of his forefathers. One day is like another; one night certifieth another; his meals mark the hours, and parish meetings the months. He performs so many diurnal revolutions on his own axis, and then forms another line on the family monument, and another tier in the family vault. But meanwhile his son, perhaps, recognises a higher type of animal existence in some University assistant at the Grammar-school, and encounters—never mind how few or far between—some high-souled companions at College. So, by degrees, he moves in a wider orbit, and, starting in life far ahead of his father, lives to have a son, who also takes the liberty of starting considerably ahead of his father, too.

Never did the generation of sons steal so long a march on their fathers, as they did from twenty to twenty-five years ago. And very probably I was not the only candidate who found all these time-serving sentiments touch a very different chord to that which had so lately responded to the good Bishop's appeal.

We will not dwell long on the kind visits of congratulation that were paid me. Of course all the old servants and villagers,—all who had known me in the nursery, or helped me in bird's-nesting or other boyish adventures, made the usual remarks about the lapse of time, and about the infant as of yesterday having grown to be the teacher of all Bowdon. A few weeks were to pass away before I was expected by the Rector of Yatton. Meanwhile, my father gave our Vicar a hint to request my assistance to read prayers on the following Sunday; and the consequence was, I had a horrible nightmare, fancying—as I have fancied more than twenty times since in some fit of nocturnal indigestion—that I had given out the Lesson, and was vainly turning over the whole Bible to find the place of one of the minor Prophets. However, when Sunday came, what with doubling down leaves, and making marks on the margin, I went through the service without any mistake.

No sooner did old Hoskins, our clerk, come to take off my surplice in the vestry, than I asked if all hadn't gone much as usual?

"They'll be glad o' you here always; pretty many o' them boys as keeps shuffling with their feet, or wishing for the time to be out, sir."

"Why so, Hoskins?"

"Because you did put on sich a pace, sir. Arn't you most tired?"

So the truth came out. Like other novices, I had pitched my voice nowhere, and read as in a room—that is, nearly twice as fast as a man can read if he spaces his words so as to be heard distinctly in a large building. However, many a neighbour lingered behind to tell either me or my father and mother that my reading was "very promising,"—a polite way of saying "might be better," I was well aware; for old Hoskins was no flatterer. Indeed, some weeks after he vindicated his sincerity by saying, "It's a deal better now, Mr. Harry; it's not sich a gabble. Besides, you arn't so husky!"

In the course of the week I was talking to old Molly Brown, and she said, "Well, Master Harry, I heard you a Sunday." "Did you, Molly?" I said, inwardly desiring to hear what impression I made. "Yes," she said, "I did; and I did so pity you, Master Harry. You seemed all in a flurry, and you was as white as any *copse*."

And yet, such was my delusion, I thought my performance was unexceptionable.

To read in a church is no easy matter. You are required to use your voice in a manner wholly new. You have to pitch your voice in a certain key, to dwell upon your vowels, and to read much louder than you ever read before. If really natural, you seem artificial; and you must become in a degree artificial to seem natural. Like an actor, you must, till habit forms a second nature, appear to yourself to exaggerate, that you may not sound flat and feeble to your audience.

The adventures of any poor curate in quest of a proper tone of voice would often be amusing indeed. At one time I was told that I was too low: next Sunday this made me thin and wiry. Then I read in a monotone; to avoid which I became uneven, as if trying every note of the gammut by turns. When at last I was settling down into some regular habit, our doctor, who had been reading some paper on elocution, asked me if I happened to have a pretty good stomach; for, he could tell me that I tasked that department not only with my Sunday dinners, but also with my Sunday duty;—in short, I read from my stomach!

Here was another alteration. Then, in altering this, I was alarmed at being told that I read from my throat; and what with bending my chin, and with a stiff cravat, the clerical sore throat must come in no time. Add to this, I was informed ana-

tomically that the roof of the mouth was nature's sounding-board, and that the nostrils were intended to act like the holes of a flute; and that what was called "reading through the nose" was a misnomer, for I really ought to read through my nose: in proof of which, I had only to hold my nose while I read, and I should produce the true conventicle tone at once.

I am only relating a simple fact when I say, that almost every error in the use of my poor lungs, stomach, throat, palate, tongue, teeth, and nasal organ, had their day with me; and rarely do I hear a clergyman read but I recognise one or more of the same blunders.

A common fault in reading is the monotone; and when, as I sometimes hear, there is this drowsiness of tone added to a "drift," or see-saw of measured cadences, at the same time, why then even the old tune of "lullaby, baby," itself cannot be compared to such soothing sounds for rocking the cradle of the hearer's brains.

Reading in a church wants so much breath, you cannot afford to waste any. The labour is so great to vocal organs you cannot afford to tire them needlessly. The voice required is so loud, you cannot afford to lose any of the aids of intonation, articulation, or reverberation. In one word, your lungs, throat, and mouth form one complicated machine, and in reading in a church these organs are applied to a new purpose, almost as different as singing is from talking; and the wisest thing a young curate can do is to take a course of lessons from a good elocution-master.

A benevolent Churchman could hardly spend his money better than in maintaining a clerical reading-master for the benefit of the diocese. Many a clergyman, for want of knowing the benefit he could derive from a course of reading, inflicts a cruel drawl on his congregation, and unnecessary labour on himself. As to the clerical sore throat, the barrister and the speaker are alike free from it. The Dissenting preacher is also comparatively free. It is, for the most part, an orthodox complaint. It comes not from talking, but from reading, and partly from reading badly. Though I would impress that any man may sustain injury if he reads when he has a sore throat.

To show what may be attained by reading lessons, I will read two anecdotes relating to two of the most experienced elocutionists of the day.

1. A certain actor, being indisposed, resolved one night not actually to absent himself, but to deliver his part without exertion. Much to his surprise, he was assured that he never spoke so loud before. From that observation, he discovered the secret of

reading audibly without effort, and (as it was) formed a system of instruction accordingly.

2. In the House of Commons were two brothers. One, from his sonorous voice, was called Bubble; the other, from having scarcely any voice at all, was called Squeak. On one of O'Connell's nights, some ten members were on their legs at once, and the whole House in an uproar; a hundred voices were calling "Order!" but little Squeak's voice was distinctly audible over all. Mr. ——, who was present, struck with the fact that the worst voice in the House of Commons could produce so great an effect, considered the principle on which this effect depended, and shortly after commenced his valuable lessons to the clergy on the management of the voice.

The last fortnight before I was expected at my curacy, my kind and Christian-hearted Aunt Charlotte had arranged I should spend with her. She had bought me a gown of the richest silk, and presented me with some thirty volumes of sermons, "published by request"—of people probably who all meant to be civil, but did not all mean to pay.

This good relation, in the opinion of the family, had lived the life of an invalid martyr. "She had been," said one doctor of the old school, "twice round my shop. I have tried everything upon her."—"It is more than fifteen years," said my sister Fanny, "mamma said I must not have a coloured frock because Aunt Charlotte couldn't possibly hack and cough through the winter."

Aunt thought she had lived a life of mercies. All depends on the way you look at things. She had long since felt as under sentence of death, so every day seemed a merciful respite; like the soldier who reckoned himself dead all over before he went into action, and was thankful for every limb he brought out. Still, she had a thorn in the flesh. Her nerves would twitch and vibrate with the least annoyance, and she would almost frown you from her presence, and ere long as surely call you back, and say how Satan buffeted her. Yet she was aware that, as she was born free from the temptations of the lanes and alleys, this was intended for her trial.

"And isn't it just, Harry?" she once said. "I am born too rich to steal, too refined to drink and be drunken, or to take God's name in vain. So, positively, there would be few commandments I could break—Susan and I alone in this room—but for these sins of the temper and the tongue, added to the secret idols of the heart. And now," she said, "powerless as I am, if I can but

animate you, my dear boy, to be a minister indeed, I feel I shall have done something before I die. I am, I know, but a poor 'old maid,' as your saucy father has often told me. Still, while mothers are occupied with all the cares of the nursery, and have always their minds full of teething, rickets, measles, schooling, and such infantine complaints, I feel it a responsibility in a sister to keep a watchful eye, and, from the abundance of my leisure, to make up for my dear brother's shortcomings.

"Do you know, Harry,"—she continued, in allusion to family losses which she had long been saving money to counteract,—"I knew that blow was coming. I knew it—yes, I knew it by my feelings, just as the falling mercury forebodes the storm. I did, indeed. I knew what all those years of speculation would end in. My brother, you remember, often laughed at me because I didn't understand those horrid figures, that seemed scratched at last so deeply on his anxious brow and pallid cheeks; but God had said, 'Thou shalt not covet,' but live by honest labour: and as I plainly saw God's laws, all England over, set at nought, I thought of the foolish man who built his house upon the sand, and was prepared for the storm, and to see 'great was the fall thereof.'"

Here, this good Christian woman afforded one more proof that things "hidden from the wise and prudent"—things that defy all worldly cunning and calculation—are yet "revealed" to hearts as pure and to instincts as uncorrupted and as healthy as those of "babes."

I have now made my reader acquainted with Aunt Charlotte, and he will not be surprised to hear that she promised to increase my little income at Yatton. She hoped I should not be reduced to take pupils, but should give myself wholly to the ministry. My vocation, she said, was not like any other in this world. A man might be half a doctor or half a lawyer, but he could never be half a minister of Christ. The Apostles appointed seven men of honest report, that they might not serve tables, or, be troubled with charity accounts. She could never forget a sermon she once heard on this text:—

"Ministers," said the preacher, "should resolutely decline all duties which laymen can perform. Set a man over a parish, and give him that single work to do, and you may expect him to discharge it. But, put the same man on school committees, and asylum and hospital committees, or encumber him with public business and improvements of any kind, and you soon distract and secularise the man—you not only divert one-half his efforts, but you really take the soul out of the other half. If the Gospel is

true, it is tremendously true; and a pastor's efficiency depends on giving every one the impression that he devotes himself wholly unto the Lord."

When she heard these words she thought of pupils. If, like St. Paul, I must positively follow some worldly calling not to be chargeable to any, she trusted I should do it as a means to an end; and she hoped to see the day when the affluent would add to the income of their minister, and feel it to be a disgrace to themselves where a rectory was turned into a school.

Here the good woman spoke "as if one inquired of the oracle of God." The Tractarians have broken up, in parts, the ice of selfishness, and had the actual courage to spend sums of money in a cause which has generally been priceless in the theory, but almost penniless in the practice of men. Our Church endowments, like our Poor-laws, are so far blessings, that they have saved thousands from perishing by lack of knowledge as by lack of bread.

But, all these mechanical appliances have one great disadvantage, which all good men must be careful to counteract. I mean, that they deprive certain virtues of their natural sphere and healthy exercise till the said virtues lose the free use of their limbs. We have so long compounded for charity by paying poor rates, that, instead of "Pity the sorrows of a poor old man," the rising generation are taught never to give in *the streets* — without being told how else to give — that "the poor" and "impostor" are convertible terms; and that, instead of a shilling warm from the palm of charity, they should carry tickets; and, worst of all, the poor-law endowments have given lugubrious currency to that frightful word *pauper*, one degree more horrible than *corpse*.

Church endowments and rates are qualified in value, however great their value, by the same infirmity of man — by the same readiness to believe that, because a little is paid all is paid. All poor rates guarantee is, that the people shall not actually starve. All that church rates and endowments guarantee in things spiritual is barely a crumb a-piece for the whole population; but yet these very crumbs have too often been the excuse for withholding our goodly loaves.

For two years, as dean rural, I had the care of five-and-twenty churches, and often complained that no linen was so dirty as church linen, — no furniture so mean and shabby as church furniture, — no Bibles and Prayer-books so tattered and greasy. Let any reflecting tourist visit the churches of England, comparing them with the private houses, and he cannot but ask himself the

question, Why is it that the English people reserve the most dirty, the most beggarly, and the most absurd of all things for — I blush to say it — for the house of prayer ? The answer is, the churches are supported by a kind of poor's rate, — compulsion takes all heart out of the matter ; and thus the churches, like the poor of England, are placed to a great degree out of the pale of generous or decent feeling.

My sad experience without a church rate will soon show that all I mean is, that we must preserve our Christian liberality while we defend the rate.

Turn from the churches to consider the clergy. Why do a dozen carriages stand at that church-door, their owners seeing their ministers worse paid than their butlers, — toiling without help or relief, and Sunday after Sunday so exhausted by the Liturgy, that the finest sermon, from want of energy, must fall flat and powerless on the ear ? Once more, because there is a small endowment, and the laity are born and bred with a notion that, because some are paid all are paid. Ninety-nine men out of a hundred have no more idea of helping the finances of the Church than of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Not so Aunt Charlotte. If the Curate of Blindham were to take pupils it would be no fault of hers. She sent the curate — whoever that curate might be — ten pounds a-year, to increase the value of the Blindham Curacy.

CHAPTER VII.

MY FIRST CURACY — A PARISH AS IN OLDEN TIME — OUR SCHOOLS, SERMONS, DISSENTERS, AND TALK WITH OUR VILLAGE BLACKSMITH.

I NOW took leave of this good Christian lady, and returned home to prepare for my curacy.

I had two days only to spend at home. It was known that my quarters at Yatton would be some farm-house lodging, and my mother and sisters—after much laughter at the idea of my keeping house for myself, ordering my own dinners, counting up my own linen, and seeing to my own mending and sewing buttons on—kindly provided me with a large basket of hams, jams, and grocery, as well as pens, needles, and stationery; and then I was escorted to the coach at the end of the lane by nearly all the family, and really I did feel some indescribable little weakness when I reflected that I could no longer call my father's house my home.

My Rector's servant was waiting with a wheelbarrow at Yatton turnpike; for I had been kindly invited to spend the first night at the Rectory.

No one was at home as I entered the house, so I had some half-an-hour to explore the study, the ground-floor, and the garden, and from his books and "fixings" to form my conjectures of the man. This was no difficult problem. I could read the owner's history in what met my eye. Some school and college books, quite of an elementary kind, showed me he was always a backward child. Books of field-sports, farming and farriery, implied that he was made chiefly for out-of-door occupations, while his theological collection, which was very limited, consisted of "Village Sermons," and "Discourses, Plain and Practical," and "On Fasts and Feast-days"—(all intended for men who never could do their own themes and essays at school)—and *comprised also some* old 'standard authors,' of which to *stand* on

the shelf is often the principal use. All this showed me that my first Rector would be a man who had as little idea of furnishing his mind, as his house, with the fancies or discoveries of the day.

A newspaper scrap-book, with a few memoranda of things curious, was on the table. As it fell open I read the following letter, and pithy remark:—

"Dear Ned,

"If Black Bess doesn't break my neck, I'll be with you Wednesday.

"Yours,

"A. B."

"*Mem.*—Black Bess *did* break his neck."

While I was ruminating on this symptom of a man of few words the Rector entered, and received me courteously. He was a fine old gentleman, nearly seventy, with a long broad-flapped coat, knee-breeches, and gaiters; and after offering some refreshment he led me into the garden, and, walking to a little eminence, he pointed out the bounds of the parish. He began describing the place and the people; but, for the most part, forgot that I had everything to learn, and alluded to all matters parochial as if I had known them as long as he had.

"You recollect the funeral, please sir?" said his parlour-maid, as we passed the door after about half-an-hour's talk.

"Funeral? Oh, yes! Hannah Winsom's," he replied. "I am glad you reminded me. What was I thinking of!—Here, Sarah, bring a second surplice. Mr. Austin shall make a beginning; but I must read at the grave for old-acquaintance' sake.—Poor Hannah! Now, do you know, Mr. Austin, I shall miss that woman, though only a pauper, more than many a fine lady? I can't pass her door without feeling instinctively for my snuff-box: for, many's the pinch I have put into her 'baccy tin."

The surplice being brought, I was quickening my step towards the church, when he said, "There is no such hurry. They generally stay drinking to the memory of the departed till Isaac goes to say I am coming."

This was my first funeral; and I read the Epistle deeply impressed by this natural and simple way of consigning the worn-out cottager to the grave. Still, while the Rector was reading, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," my eye caught some boys "riding cock-horse" on the tombstone, and Isaac shaking his stick at them,—one proof more that the pure

sublime is very rare in this world; the ridiculous in life, as in Hogarth, is never far off.

After dinner Mr. Thomas said:—

"You'll be ready to preach on Sunday afternoon? I shall look out a sermon for the morning. You will dine with me every Sunday, of course. Your landlady, Mother Weston, pretty nearly starved Williamson, one of my curates. Not so much as a rasher of bacon would she dress for him on a Sunday. You must take care not to offend her. There is no other house within miles."

I had not been there one week before I had christened, churched, and married, as well as buried; and having a list of sick persons to visit, and always one, if not two, sermons to write, I found myself in the full routine of clerical duty, almost before I was aware of it.

But it may be needful to enter a little into the ways and ideas of my first Rector, the Rev. Edward Thomas.

Mr. Edward Thomas was a clergyman of a past generation; and, not to be too hard upon him, by the standard of that benighted generation he ought to be judged. Considering the more stirring examples of my day, and the chilling influence of his, our respective talents were as one talent to his stewardship and ten to mine.

We may imagine a Bœotian—a stupefying age, as well as a Bœotian clime. The fogs and mists of prejudice may constitute so heavy an atmosphere, that those who breathe it from the cradle may well claim a little indulgence. Sir Matthew Hale was still a wise man, though he could sit gravely in judgment on a case of witchcraft. The Rev. E. Thomas was not a bad man, although he could not rise superior to the follies of his day.

"Master 's a good Churchman," said Abel Duck (our clerk)—"master is none of your Methody sort—he hasn't changed nothing in the parish: all is exactly as old master left it."

Yes. He found a certain Church system, or machinery standing, and had mechanically kept it going. He had "read prayers" and lessons, and published banns, all in the same tone of voice; and had preached in the same tone, too. And if, seeing every mother's child duly christened, married, and buried, and sending off Farmer Kenton's tax-cart full of comatose rustics triennially for Confirmation,—if this were the whole duty of man, the Rev. E. Thomas had done his part at Yatton.

So soul-less was the course he had found; so soul-less was the *course he followed*. He had gone on where the former rector had

left off; and there's no knowing how many Yatton rectors had done the same. But there is nothing surprising in this. Even laymen cling convulsively to abuses, and rarely turn over a new leaf till the old one is thumbed past all endurance; and the clergy have far less to make them loose their hold.

The Yatton rectors were, of course, "endowed," just as the Yatton farmers were "protected;" and both rectors and farmers were, for the very same reason, equally slow in adopting any new measures for the care of their respective flocks.

But in these remarks let me not appear insensible of the blessings of endowments. Even such pastors as I am describing were much better than none. As long as endowed rectories, like endowed schools, are kept standing, so long a good minister may come and replace a bad; in other words, as long as the conduits and channels are preserved, they are ready once more to gush forth with living waters, whenever some true man of God appears to bid them flow. I would only impress that all earthly blessings are earthly snares; nor are any blessings more qualified than those of Church endowments; and of this I solemnly adjure all young clergymen to take heed.

Virgil says of farming,—

"Sic omnia fatis
In pejus ruere ac retro sublapsa referri."

That is to say, everything which is left to take its course takes a bad course. Certainly, we may construe *sic omnia fatis* to mean, "nothing without competition is very likely to grow better." And an endowment means "no competition," or "pay for good work, bad work, or scarcely any work at all."

Bad habits and prejudices—a certain *religio loci*, and vested rights to do things wrong—these are as the docks and thistles of the mind; and since rectories, like farm-houses, must alike be tenanted by that wrong-headed creature, man, it follows that endowments with the one, like protection with the other, sadly militate against improvement.

Free trade, I admit, will not apply to the Church. We should, indeed, have a trade, and a very free trade, too. When it is left entirely to the demand to regulate the supply, there may be no demand at all, or such only as shall cause a vicious supply. All this we perfectly admit; but at the same time we must not forget, that when the party who supplies is not quite alive to the nature of the demand, there is little indeed to remind him of his failings.

Now, an endowment amounts to the no-competition, the irresponsible, the monopoly, and, indeed, the take-it-or-leave-it principle—a principle which, to some extent, prevails in public offices, with losses and confusion various; as also in barracks, condemning the poor soldier to pestiferous quarters and insipid food; and, in short, in dockyards, and many other instances.

It is a kind of principle almost certain to spoil or impair everything to which it is applied. Endow tailors' shops, and you would have no new patterns and rarely a coat to fit. Endow bakers' ovens, and the men would argue by the hour that heavy bread was light, or, perhaps, that if people didn't like heavy bread they ought to like it. But when self-interest is affected, men change their views, and become the most accommodating creatures we can imagine. Nay, they compete most ingeniously with each other in adapting their loaves even to the weakest digestion or the loosest teeth: they offer bread, fancy or common; bread, white or brown; bread, crusty or not crusty. So inventive, so considerate, and so obliging, with free competition, is money-making man; but just try him with a certain salary, or endowment, and the same man turns at once pig-headed, or as surly as a bear.

Therefore, my dear Clerical Brethren, you must not suppose that you can, without the utmost care and self-searching, escape those deadening influences which blind the eyes or damp the energies of all other men. How was it that the Rev. John Batt, at the College living of Anley, went on year after year in an unknown tongue, and with learned topics void of interest, distributing, in place of the Bread of Life, something heavy, indeed, and indigestible—like stones to those who asked for bread?

All this was simply because there was not, as with the tradesman, anything to inform Mr. Batt that he was always giving one thing to those who required another. Nothing, did I say? yes, there was one thing, but a thing too little regarded. For, it was once remarked of an eminent counsel, that if he had only looked the jury in the face he would have modified his address and gained a verdict. But, unhappily, many preachers never do look their people in the face, or they would see at a glance that they were talking to the wind.

I say, therefore, my Clerical Brethren, beware of the delusive and blinding influences of an endowment. Seek wisdom, that is, self-knowledge, above gold and precious stones: seek it by prayer, and self-examination. For no men have so little to teach them in their daily walk as you have. No other profession commands,

like yours, that most dangerous of all things in the hands of erring man—irresponsible power. Even public opinion checks you less than other men. "The purity of the Bench," said a learned judge, "is ensured by this;—while sitting in Court to-day we know we shall sit in the newspapers to-morrow." The surgeon, the lawyer, the tradesman, are all wound up to concert-pitch; the patients, the clients, or the customers serve as masters to keep them to their work. Hungry competitors are ever waiting to pounce upon their errors and take their places, like schoolboys up at class. Now, boys learn the pace of their class, fast or slow. Men do the same. Some men will pull actively when matched one against another, though they are very mules in single harness. But a clergyman, however slow by nature, is unfortunately left without any such stimulus to make him fast; and every young clergyman should be emphatically warned of this disadvantage. A clergyman must daily calculate his progress, and study economy of time, punctuality, and business-like habits. He must reflect that he is beset by an insidious temptation, being more his own master than any other man; and must take care lest the blessing of independence should prove in eternity his ruin.

As to doctrine, our independent position is an unqualified blessing indeed; and therefore it has come to pass that our doctrines are to Scripture, "true as the dial to the sun." An endowment alone can ensure that there shall exist no interest at variance with truth. "Those who live to please must please to live," says Johnson; and again, "The stage but echoes back the public voice." The minister of a speculative chapel is too apt to feel his way, and, as it were, to read his sermon off the smiles of his congregation; and, so far, he will resemble, not the seal to stamp an impression on others, but the wax to receive one himself. No, it is not in doctrine: it is in versatility, tact and address—points in which the minister of a proprietary chapel generally beats the parish church—in which an endowment so signally fails.

Suppose, for instance, every parish had its Surgery, as it now has its Rectory-house. As regards pure science, as pure doctrine, this would be excellent: we should never have a dose too much, and always the best of its kind; but then we should have doctors as impatient as Abernethy, and many a fractious patient who now is coaxed into health would be told "to take it or leave it." As it is, a train of hearse and mourning-coaches, with the doctor's carriage looking very guilty in the throng, makes doctors attend a little to results, and also to study not only the nature of the medicine, but the temper of the patient.

But, contrariwise, my poor old Rector never thought of the constitution of his patients at all. Thousands never do. "Mine is orthodox Church-of-England doctrine," he used to say: and so it was, very wholesome medicine, I admit; only his pills were too big to swallow, and his prescriptions were half in Latin: that is to say, they were all in Johnsonian or Pulpit English. Sometimes the style was also flowery; and much good writing is made illegible by superfluous flourish. An ornate or flowery style, in a sermon for the poor, is like painted glass in a church naturally dark; whereas, the first requisite, both in words and windows, is transparency, to let in light.

It must, I think, have been a Yatton parishioner, of whom Southey tells the following story:—

"This is a blessed day—this day of rest, to you, John?" said a country rector to one of the sons of the soil.

"Yes, zur, this be a blessed day. I goes to church; I sits me down; I lays my legs up; and I thinks o' nothing."

Never was there a more graphic picture of the hob-nailed frequenters of Yatton church. Of course, whether you are preaching to a man or only talking to him, there can never be any doubt whether John is really interested or whether he is merely waiting "till our parson has a done."

I am sorry to say anything that may sound severe—though it is best to hold the mirror up to folly for it to see itself—but an idea of the æsthetic and of the orthodox causes numbers to read and preach as if their message were of no possible concern to any one; as if prayers and preaching were a charm—an *opus operatum;* and as if, "when 'twere done 'twere done." Certainly, if any one were to stand out in the road, and with the same tone of voice were to tell the mail-coachman that he was driving headlong into a pit, the man would never think he was in earnest, but would whip on all the faster.

This senseless monotony was practised by some of the old school, out of heedlessness, but by too many of a certain new school out of principle. It seems as if one of the marble figures, after lying for a century on its back, with hands clasped over its breast, had been raised up stiff, cold, and passionless, on to its feet, as a speaking automaton of senseless sounds.—There were some silly fellows at Oxford who used to affect short trousers and black stockings, because Mr. Newman's trousers happened to be short and his stockings black. Even so has the quiet emphasis of the authors of the *Christian Year* and the *Cathedral* been caricatured, instead of copied, by men who could go deeper than

the accidents, or perhaps the errors, of those earnest-minded men.

To return to Yatton. As to the religion of that neglected people — a patch of heathendom in the midst of Christendom — it exemplified what I once read on a tombstone, — "His religion was that by law established." Robert South spoke of people having barely soul enough to keep their bodies from putrefaction. Yatton people wanted their ears syringed that they might hear, and their minds roused that they might apprehend: — all this as preliminary. For the word of God is still a "word." It must first enter into the ear, and then be grasped by the mind, before it can sink into the heart.

The rustic ear is used to bleating of sheep and cawing of rooks, and to a few short sentences shouted across the field, but it is quite unused to the language of books or to connected sentences. As to preaching the word in the usual style to such persons as these, with "secondly, thirdly, and to conclude," anything like pulpit conventionalism was preposterous. They wanted the word, not preached, but driven into them, like the nail of Jael into the temples of Sisera. A Parson Pound-text is the man for such a congregation as this: though, thanks be to the wisdom of God, very few are the texts, when well chosen, which it is necessary to pound. Our blessed Lord taught only one at a time, and a whole parable to enforce but one. Dr. Chalmers recommended that there should be only one principle in one sermon. It is also related of Bishop Blomfield that he once said at an Ordination, — "I would add a word before we part: Don't try to put the whole of Scripture into one discourse."

Imagine my difficulties at Yatton. Somewhat the same as in the wilds of Arabia. How can a Paul plant or an Apollos water, when the ground is yet unbroken for the seed? I have heard much well-intended nonsense talked about education being worse than useless, if religion is not taught in the school. One Home Missionary, at least, at Yatton, would have found his labours materially lightened, had the Yatton ears and Yatton minds been already exercised with reading, arithmetic, and geography. And this, I say, not for the positive use of these things. As to Arithmetic, they could all work fractions of days with the farmer, and check the half-pints chalked up behind the alehouse door. And as to Geography, the two Tuckers had gone very straight to Botany Bay, after stealing old Cottle's sheep. No, it was not for the use but for the exercise. These things are wanted by the pastor to awaken, to galvanize, and open the portals to the soul.

I have known an old granny's Bible laid on the shelf for want of spectacles. I have known a deaf man brought to church by a present of an ear-trumpet. I would, therefore, have greeted a schoolmaster as I would an optician or an aurist, for making way for the word to enter.

I need not be reminded that, in a certain manner, no religion may prove irreligion, and that there is a way of shelving religion with such indifference, that to leave it out of school may endanger leaving it out of life. Still, this cry has been raised in the wrong place, and much blessed food has been kept from starving children by rather a party—than a hearty—cry of "Rank poison."

But, it must not be supposed that there was not some kind of school at Yatton. The master was a poor cripple, and, like many other masters, he kept the school because nothing but a school would keep him. There once was a meeting held to displace him; but mercy prevailed. "Do ye look at his poor legs," said one farmer.

The Spelling-book and Testament served as Delectus and Cæsar with us, and was about as little associated with any religious sentiment. If religion promulgated by the sword is useless, religion taught by the cane is not much better. Still, many a pastor, who has himself smarted through life at the very name of Horace, has allowed the same means to be taken to invest the Bible with the "sighs and groans of his early Britons."

Religious education means, training to love religion; and certainly it is not embodied in anything very lovable as seen by a boy in a parish master. Aristotle wisely said, that a great part of persuasiveness depends on your fancy for the speaker. But a schoolmaster must be a rare man to last prepossessing long. "No cook's temper can stand the kitchen fire," said an old housekeeper, "above three years." All that is sweet in a master commonly turns to vinegar in a much shorter time. You cannot expect whippings and blessings pure and proper from the same man, any more than milk and vinegar from the same vessel. Add to this a heartless way of confusing things sacred and profane—"Slates, boys," "Bibles, boys," "Geography, boys," "Prayers," "'Rithmetic," all bawled down the school or diagrammed upon the wall—or done mechanically. Mechanically? Why I have seen twenty children go plump down on their knees to say their prayers at the word of command! I never could enter this kind of school without feeling, as a certain Government Inspector was so unofficial as to let out, "Thank God, no child of mine is taught religion in this manner!"

Never was there a better heart than that which throbbed under

the brown stuff in winter, and the printed calico in summer, of our Rector's lady, Mrs. Thomas; and when one day she entered the school-room, as her custom was two or three times a-week, and calling, like an old Christian goody, the baby-minders and the bird-keepers round her, leant down her beehive bonnet to impress the story of Joseph and his Brethren, or the Prodigal Son, then I felt how "truth from her lips prevailed with double sway." As she reverently opened the Bible, with subdued tones, in unison with holy things, and with silent finger stilled to a solemn calm the tumultuous spirits in pinafores and fustian, the book itself seemed transformed. It had before been bare "Texts," or "Reading," or "Testament," with the jaded master, but now it was handled feelingly as the "Word of God." She called them "my dears" and "dear children:" and the words of love were more winning from the lips of love.

Then she had a pretty store of Scripture sayings, short and weighty, as plants with goodly roots, or holy bulbs just bursting into life. "God seeth you;" "The darkness is no darkness to Him;" "His eye can pierce your cottage thatch;" "God heareth you; all your wicked words are written in His book. Jesus only can blot them out, or write His perfections over them."

One day the good lady said—and, I should like to know who was father to the thought—"You saw rich Farmer Walter's funeral, did you not, my dears? It was only last fair that he stood among flocks of sheep and droves of oxen, and could walk halfway home across his own broad lands; but when he was let down into the grave, 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust,' the three bare handfuls on his coffin-lid told, as in mockery to the richest landlord or the poorest ploughboy, 'we brought nothing into this world, it is certain we can carry nothing out.'"

As I walked home I could not help reflecting that *here* was the great school question solved. Government grants will pay for school-rooms, model desks, and slates and rulers, for black boards and patent chalk; nay, more, it will pay for men and women to moisten the said slates, and to jumble Martin Luther, Cassivelaunus and Thomas à Becket, all up together, in a ludicrous attempt to stow away the sweets of learning, before Billy Binks' carroty-coloured hive is fitted up with cells. It may even turn hypothetical hogsheads into imaginary puncheons, and girdle the whole earth with barleycorns.

Well. Anything is an improvement that tends to break up the fallows of the rustic mind—anything to correct torpidity of brain—anything for a shock of intellectual electricity, and keep

up a healthy circulation in the parish skull. I would hail even a four-horse coach, galloping daily through a country village, as helping to brighten up the parish boys: while the stir and stimulus of a railway, with its busy station and many trains, may do wonders. But, as to religious education with paid masters, however ingeniously ticketed or certificated they may be, we may cease to dispute about it. From the same fountain you cannot have waters both bitter and sweet—you cannot make the same man exhibit the terrors of the Law alternate half-hours with the loving-kindness of the Gospel. No, no. Your master must be chiefly employed to rouse and train, and awaken the dormant intellect, and then the clergyman and Christian men and women must come in and enact the part of Goody Thomas, to kindle from their own celestial fire the flame of piety in the rustic mind. Why, my old master, Dr. Griskin, would never have kindled such a flame in me and my schoolfellows; no, nor five hundred Griskins dotted over all the country. I distinctly remember receiving this impression when I once heard him officiate in church—"Yes, you're a nice one, old boy, to look so meek and mild: but, if these people could only have a peep into our school and see you there—that's all!" No, we had mothers to fan the heavenly spark, and old Griskin simply bore witness to the truth, and left that spark to increase as best it might.

But here let me clearly state that I certainly would employ none but men of Christian character in schools, because "he that is not with" the Gospel "is against" it. And nothing tends more to religious education than the example of church-going men in authority.

The Duke of Wellington at daily service was a standing homily to every man who wore a British uniform. The judges at assize-time, first seeking wisdom of God before sitting to enunciate the laws of man, are also invaluable witnesses to the faith. Every man great in science or in art, all who hold the vulgar mind in awe by piercing the starry heavens above, or laying bare the structure of the earth beneath—above all, every learned society or philosophical association, would do well to inaugurate their meetings by a solemn procession to the house of God.

For, it is in these open demonstrations of religion that we have a ready appeal, and a short and telling argument with the Infidel:—Behold our Shakspeares and our Miltons, Newton and Pascal, Scott and Southey, Burke and Wilberforce—behold in every sphere of genius a cloud of witnesses—see how, in the world of intellect, "all the works of the Lord praise the Lord," and join

with one voice and one mind in the same general assent to Christian truth.

This is why for a schoolmaster we must have a religious man; namely, that religion may not be ignored by his example, however little he may be required to teach it. Still, it will not be by any kind of religious education which paid masters can impart, that we must hope either to empty the county gaol or to fill the parish church. Every school must reserve a quiet corner for the clergyman or for such kind friends as Goody Thomas.

In this village school I spent many an hour during the two years of my Yatton curacy. I had laid down a rule that for so many hours a-day I would follow the advice of a good working parson, who said, "Pull on your mud boots, and tramp about your parish to visit all who want you. This, I think, is by far the best kind of 'Muscular Christianity.'"

This school was to me the most attractive part of my duty. Much of a curate's time can hardly be better spent. The visits you can pay to sick-rooms are limited. You cannot, of course, pray mechanically, or by the hour. Where an effort of the mind and a yearning of the heart must go together, it is a great mistake to suppose that the visits of a clergyman can be as many in a day as those of the lawyer or the doctor, whose visits very often require no effort of mind at all. The houses of the poor are always close, and the chamber of sickness has disagreeables of its own. So, pity the sorrows of a poor curate, who has many a time tried to read without taking breath, from a painful consciousness that he was filling his lungs not with air but malaria.

Two of my friends died of typhus caught in a cottage, and I once experienced so peculiar a sensation in the mouth and throat, that I hastened away to expel suspicious saliva and to take some brandy. I have always believed that the seeds of typhus were all but planted then.

Visits to sick-rooms, therefore, will not fill up the whole day with clergymen generally. My belief is, that our clergy are too refined and too sensitive to do half the work that an inferior order of men could perform in visiting: and this is no slight argument for lay-agency.

I am very far from making excuses for idleness, and am well aware that judges and counsel will breathe the offensive steam of an unwashed crowd twelve hours a-day at assizes. Still I have seen those of a lower order sitting with so little inconvenience, and almost by choice, in the room of a cancerous patient, and ignore all pretence for opening a window, whereas we have been taught

from childhood to pamper our nerves olfactory with lavender, and to deem it vulgar not to shrink aside if anything "unmannerly" pass betwixt the wind and our "nobility." In this respect the devoted members of the City Mission do much which some of the clergy would be physically incapable of performing.

There is also another advantage possessed by men of an inferior order, in visiting. They feel as much excitement (and excitement is extra power) while hammering truisms into three or four washer-women, as a clergyman feels before an educated congregation. This is a decided advantage. A speaker soon wearies where he is not conscious of any sympathy or response. But a plain man, like Isaac Hopkins, would bawl away delighted with the sound of his own voice.

Isaac Hopkins was our bellows-blower at Yatton Church, though all the time a Dissenter at heart. Nothing but the bellows kept Isaac "true to his church." The Badminton menial refused a Whig candidate his vote, because, he said, "I hunt with the Duke." Hopkins held to the Church party because he could say, "I blow for the parson." But the staring fact, that when Isaac slipped off to hear "Methody" on the sly, he heard his mother tongue "with the sense in it," and all seemingly hot from the heart, whereas master's was cold and like "nothing to nobody" from a book—this tried Isaac's orthodoxy very hard, no *ism* being half as repulsive as dull*ism*.

Seeing that the said Hopkins was a compound of about two parts religion to one part conceit, and one part a scholar, I hit upon a plan, which I would strongly recommend for keeping—(if worth keeping)—a would-be Dissenter to the Church. I found Isaac Hopkins a sphere for his enthusiasm, and a platform for his eloquence at the same time.

"Molly Hancock, poor soul!" I said, one day, "cannot prevail upon her bad legs to carry her as far as church. You have a fine loud voice, Hopkins, and Molly is hard of hearing."

This was hint enough for Hopkins. Oh, how often have I envied his leather lungs! Before I was within twenty yards of Molly's house I could hear him, and see a cluster of women without bonnets, and generally Teddy Edwards of the Alms-house, clustering like bees about the door. Now I couldn't do that. I could no more compare with Hopkins in pounding texts into ears hard of hearing, and heads dull of understanding, than in handling a pickaxe.

An army wants pioneers to smooth and clear the way. The Church, also, wants the same thing. We require something like

an Army Works Corps. For where is the economy in educating —and it is impossible to educate in sufficient numbers—men at the cost of 1000*l.* to 2000*l.*, and that, too, in a way to make them almost morbidly sensitive in taste and feeling, and then, as it were, to cut blocks with razors—to blunt the fine edge of their energies on natures too dull to receive any adequate impression?

An English gentleman talks only with his lips. A Frenchman talks all over, in every limb as well as every feature. The Red Indian, haranguing his tribe, raises his hands aloft and rouses the flagging attention by action which attracts the eye, as well as by passion most stirring to the ear. The English vulgar, being only a little less barbarian, require energy only a little less impassioned. And it was by a delivery of this kind, and not by quiet grace and Addisonian strain, that the Rev. Sydney Smith could make Tea-kettle Thomas lean forward upon his elbows, or Jane Cook and Susan feel the better for "their Sunday out."

But my poor old Rector preached to them—actually preached! That was a mistake. I could easily believe them when they said that "they didn't edify." All the servants at the Vicarage were "hired to go to church," so doomed rarely to hear a sermon. I say *hear;* for, the words of the Rector would barely reach the ear. That may be enough for persons of our habits: but, John and Susan want a downright jar upon the tympanum. In this respect Hopkins beat master hollow.

There wasn't a man or woman our side the turnpike-gate but said so. The arrows from the parson's quiver scarcely reached the target, but Hopkins's went plump into the heart of it. Then they all complained that "our parson never uses strong doctrines:" whereas, ruder natures want a very powerful kind of appeal; and Hopkins called heaven and hell by their plainest Bible names.

I once heard Isaac say, on an occasion when the parish was shocked by an awful visitation, "Drunkards, I tell ye, will go to hell. I don't say a man that has a drop too much and is sorry for it, once and again by accident, but I mean a man who can never go straight home with his wages"—sensation among certain women and sheepish look with certain men,—"but must always turn in at the Red Cow"—pointing with his right hand,—"or into the Chequers"—pointing with his left. "There was William Pearce. Where d'ye think he's gone to? He was always drunk. His goods executioned; and his wife and children were a heart-ache to look upon, before ever that day *he died drinking for a wager.* Now, where do you think William is gone to? Tell me that. Why, *ask* the Bible, that's all. There's mercy for them

who cry for mercy in *reasonable* time and *reasonable* manner. God Almighty never gave William time to cry. Time? Yes, he had time. Forty-seven years old he was—that's time! And our parson, let alone you and me, Sally, many 's the day, had warned him, too. I can tell you it went to my heart to hear the service read over such as he. But, when our parson came to that part about 'our hope' 'our brother' was gone to heaven, you all remember how his voice shook, and how he stammered and stopped, and then missed that line, and we were all listening for it. So drunkards, I say, will find their portion in the lake of fire: and therefore, my dear Christian brethren, turn from your drink, and don't draw one another into it. 'Drinking o' healths' you call it, and think it manly and good-fellowship; but the question is, What does Scripture call it?—Why, it's all sin and wickedness."

This was a truthful commentary—by no means the style for Hanover Square, but very stirring where a Hanover Square sermon would have sent all to sleep—on a recent event which had shocked the whole parish. I am not ashamed to admit that it was my "voice" that "shook." I heard afterwards the people were "listening." They did, as I surmised, understand "hope" as belief, and therefore I made the omission to which Isaac referred.

As to the Burial Service, whatever the grammatical sense may be, the impression received by ninety-nine out of a hundred who stand by a grave is this:—that the minister encourages them to think the deceased is saved! Certainly, this is not the meaning these words were intended by their authors to convey: still, since this is the popular acceptation, one of two things is devoutly to be wished,—either that we should have a form which does not even seem to "cry peace where there's no peace,"—or else, that those who are in no sense Christians should not be buried like those who are. I have had the pain of reading the language of Christian hope not only over this evil-liver who died drinking for a wager, but also over a notorious procuress who lived in open defiance of the laws of God and man in another parish. This case, which was as follows, has made an impression which I never can forget:—

"Please sir," said my clerk, "to step into Mrs. Moxon; she's pretty nigh the end of her wicked life at last."

"Well, Hancock, show me the way" (I had only just come to the parish), "and tell me all about her as we go along."

It was an oft-told tale: but, a trade in vice is doubly revolting to my mind when polluting a country village. I have a feeling

that "God made the country, but man made the town." We can, perhaps, imagine a house of harlotry in Belgravia, but not in such rural scenes as Wilkie drew. As I entered a little garden of honeysuckles and carnations, with a blackbird hopping about his white willow cage, while bees were humming, the air was fresh and balmy, and the clear vault of heaven was like one blue arch from hill to hill in that secluded dell—I was shocked as if feeling that God's own temple had been profaned where all creation seemed breathing incense and offering up hymns of praise.

Several of the villagers were standing about the door, and this kind of conversation was going on:—

"It is high time that her sin had found her out," said Anne Tibbs. "Hadn't it been for her, our Polly had never come to trouble."

"No," replied Hannah Jones, "and those two lads at the shop were steady boys before; 'twas she who tempted them to steal money to spend with her in wicked ways."

This, and more deeds of shame, soon filled up the gaps in Hancock's unconnected story, and I began to think how it was possible, by man's wisdom, to bring this degraded woman to a sense of sin. But I might have saved myself the trouble of a thought.

On entering the house I saw a female, of about seventy, moaning in a large arm-chair. Nurse Pipps was in attendance, another woman was acting a neighbourly part, and two more were merely indulging in the excitement of the occasion. The same morbid feeling that crowds the gallows, crowds also the death-beds of the poor.

As I drew near to make a beginning, "A dreadful bad air with her," said Mrs. Pipps; "I never had such a job in nursing, all the years that I have been in Yatton."

The room was indeed most repulsive. However, I commenced with some casual questions, but not one word did she reply.

"Deaf 'tis—stone deaf," said the old nurse, screaming out my words at the pitch of her voice.

I tried again and again, but all in vain, till at last the neighbour, a godly woman, said—words very remarkable in one of her unlettered class,—"Never mind, Master; don't ye trouble. It little matters that she has no ear to hear; it's many a day since she had ever a heart to understand."

Her day of grace seemed past—"dead while she liveth."

About a week after, the people heard the Burial Service read over this (as they believed) unrepenting sinner, "and heard the

parson say he hoped that wicked Mother Moxon was gone to heaven."

To return to Isaac Hopkins and my first trial of lay-agency; —some of my friends will suspect that Isaac was on the highroad to preferment, and will be prepared to hear of some Bethesda meeting-house, with Isaac as the Methody.

Nothing of the kind resulted in the case in question, neither would it have been any fault of mine if it had. No fear of possible results should ever prevent a clergyman from encouraging one Christian neighbour to read to another. Still, such fears have caused many a poor bed-ridden soul to be limited to a fractional and an utterly inappreciable portion of the feeble services of one tired curate.

Many persons are far more afraid of some false doctrines being taught, than of no truth at all. They have a horror of heresy and schism, while patiently resigned to heathenism. They argue that lay-teachers are not to be trusted, forgetting that a certain bishop said, "Education of some kind is always going on, and if we don't teach people the devil will."

This reminds me of certain charity economics which prevailed a few years ago. The good old ways of carrying a cut from your own loaf or your own leg of mutton when coming towards the bone to some poor family, and returning warm with their blessing—one way of laying your treasure up in heaven and actually feeling an earnest of it while yet on earth—this was declared all a mistake. It was gravely enunciated that we ought to be charitable on some grand scheme and all-embracing principle. Of course, the result of all this philosophy was, that many persons waiting for that world-wide opportunity never gave at all.

The same absurdity now cramps our faith which then chilled our charity. A poor soul who has learnt every other piece of good news naturally runs off to tell it; but the glad tidings of the Gospel, forsooth, he is not to be encouraged to tell, for fear he should tell it badly! And more than this, though the same glad tidings are written in a book, he is not to help to read that book, because, while reading the word, he may venture on the sense, and his version may not always be the right one!

This strange reasoning entirely ignores the fact that doctrine, like other things in this mortal world, is more or less sound by comparison. There are very few clergymen who would not plead guilty of having taught false doctrine on some point, in the days of their inexperience. Nay, one half the Church is always *accusing*, and being accused by the other half, of the self-same

thing. Very little bread is quite pure, and a large part of our eatables and drinkables is by no means as good for us as they might be, but that is no reason we should starve; so we put up with the best we can get, very thankful to those good people who devote their lives to ensure purity of food and health of body.

This is precisely the office the Clergy of the Established Church discharge, to ensure the purity of our spiritual food and the health of the soul. Neither can the Clergy be too jealous of the purity of the word. They should not derogate from the true standard in the balance of a hair. But this is no reason for checking or discouraging the distribution. At the miracle of the loaves, our Saviour gave to his disciples, and they to the multitude, who probably handed on to each other; and yet, with the bread of life, it is pretended that we should rather see the multitude starve than employ persons who can distribute to those whom the Clergy of the Church of England cannot hope to reach.

Consider the case of learning and school education. How small a part is done by the responsible master? how large a part is done, and much worse done, by inferior assistants? How many blunders and bad habits do these half-educated assistants entail throughout life? Still it is the best education the cause admits of, and better far than none.

Plain as this is—too plain to argue—yet have I seen, all my life, men indifferent to ignorance in their zeal for orthodoxy; men who prefer utter darkness to a degree of light by which thousands have walked in perfect safety. Who could credit such utter fatuity? Yet, it is by no means uncommon to see Ministers of the Gospel (so professing), in their horror of lay-agency as "Low Church," tolerate a state of heathenism like "no-Church-at-all."

But as to the chance of Isaac's Home Mission turning to Dissent, I would impress on my readers that I warned him seriously to limit his exhortations—for, of course, no man hearty in the cause will be satisfied with reading alone—to matters recently learnt from me. If I preached in the church, and he repeated all he could remember—and it is an invaluable rule in sermon-writing to write clearly and strikingly, as for some Isaac Hopkins to repeat—then he would be such an ally to the Church as would amount to a wide publication of the Gospel message. Isaac was delighted with this arrangement. The idea that the Minister gave to the Disciple, and he to the multitude, seemed to Isaac the perfection of discipline and good sense.

As to Dissent, Henry, bishop of Exeter, once remarked,

"You must not talk to me about people being Dissenters where they have had no Church to dissent from."—This his Lordship said of a place where there was a Church and a Minister, but only the chance of a dark corner of the church on Sundays, and a very small portion—just about one sixth-thousandth part—of the minister's energies on week-days, available for any one of the poor.

There is a rule of law, *De non apparentibus et de non existentibus eadem est ratio;* which I take to mean that, whether there is positively no Church at all, or "none to signify," the path of duty is the same. Who, then, can deny the position of our High-Church Prelate,—that for poor souls to provide teachers for themselves where the Church has provided none for them, is neither Schism nor Dissent? As to there being no Church for the poor, supposing a "Times Commissioner" were sent to inquire into the spiritual destitution of the poor, I do believe that the report would be one of the most astounding ever set forth, even from "our own reporter's" pen. A new word would then be introduced into the language. All persons not of the Church are called "Dissenters." But Dissenters become such as frequently from necessity as from choice.

It is true that some of the more violent Dissenters are of a class who could find instruction in the Church if they pleased,—not a few are persons whose Dissent is a matter of temper and self-importance—persons who care as little about doctrines as many Radicals care, or even know, about the Constitution. Many persons in religion, as in daily life, look at everything to criticise. Instead of saying, What is it, "that I may believe?" their first feeling is, What is it, "that I may differ from it?" This kind of temper results in Dissent as to religion, and in Radicalism as to politics; both forms being often found in the same character.

I do not say that there is no such thing as a conscientious Dissenter, that is, a man who, understanding the Church doctrines, can say, "While I admit nineteen parts out of twenty, my conscience is so sensitive that I cannot touch or handle anything with even one-twentieth of alloy." But I do say, that I never did meet with such delicacy of conscience in the common intercourse of life. With so scrupulous a conscience, a Dissenter's word ought to be more trustworthy than another man's bond. The wonder is that Dissenters have never been preferred for their great conscientiousness, whether as friends, debtors, or traders. The peaceable principles of Quakers make their life insurable at a reduced premium. How is it that the conscience of Dissenters

has not long since driven Churchmen altogether out of the market?

But are the Dissenters as a body *reputed* conscientious? I say nothing about what they *are*. I say, have they impressed society with the conviction? Churchmen by thousands never read the Articles or bring the Liturgy to the test of Scripture; and, if they did, they would feel no more bound to leave their Church for three or four errors in the Prayer-book, than to leave their country for as many errors in its laws. So, genuine Dissenters must, in comparison, be conscientious indeed. But, have they the credit of it? I say it not unkindly or satirically, but as a fact, that such phrases as "Mind how you deal with him, he's a Dissenter"—"he will palaver you and over-reach you at the same time"—that this I have heard all my life. Nay, more, the poet Burns, in a letter dated 1795, observed the same thing, and asked why the Dissenters were such a false set? Sir W. Scott, about 1820, discussed the same point as an acknowledged fact. So Dissenters clearly have not more conscience than other men, or they would not be even reputed to have less. Indeed, we may truly say, that, in spite of the tempting facilities of Absolution, Roman Catholics command quite as much confidence as Dissenters. All, therefore, I can understand by a conscientious Dissenter is, a man who has been born a Dissenter, and who, therefore, feels the same allegiance to his party that a Churchman feels.

Neither can I help remarking how superficial—how much in the lips and how little in the life—is the religion of Dissent. A Dissenter's religion generally has added as much of the Christian character as consists in a quiet and decent exterior. Dissenters rarely swear or use bad language, or are guilty of the more shocking and grosser forms of sin. So much to their praise. My disappointment is—seeing that thousands of persons for years to come must be either Dissenters or Heathens—to find that the leaven which leaveneth the *whole* lump—the distinctive charity and consistency of the Christian—is so rarely to be found beyond the pale of the Church.

The tree of Dissent, judged by its fruits, is bad. This is a fact very painful to observe. And it behoves the earnest and devoted leaders of the Dissenting communities to look to the root of the evil and apply a remedy.

Let it be granted, therefore, that some who are called Dissenters are positively malcontents—persons guilty of "schism," "divisions," "heresies," and all from a "carnal" or "self-pleasing" temper. But, what are we to say of the thousands and

the tens of thousands who have been actuated by no such feelings—who have been square-pewed, pulpit-Englished, and cold-shouldered out of the Church?—yes, "cold-shouldered" is by no means too strong a term, especially after the honourable testimony of the Rev. J. C. Ryle about the Special Services. "The thing," he says, "was done"—throwing open the pews and inviting the working classes to come without distinction—"and the fact was seen, that when you go out of your routine path to meet the working classes, they will come and meet you."

It actually appears, then, that to throw open the pews and to invite the poor, *without distinction*, is admitted to have been something new—quite an experiment, and an original idea. And this *distinction* aforesaid being all on the side of the upper classes, there grew up a kind of preaching to suit the upper classes too.

Take the case of Mary Snooks.

Mrs. Mary Snooks, of the chandler's shop, used to water the treacle, damp the tobacco, touch the scale-beam with her little finger, and cut off the house-flannel the wrong side her thumb: and I fancy I can see Mrs. Snooks at church, partly hidden by a pillar in *chiaro 'scuro*, catching half sentences of a sermon as little suited to her rough nature as a dish of flummery to a hungry navvy. I have examined a great many such persons as Mary Snooks, and I give the following as the report of some "Times' Commissioner:"—

Mr. Frost is a schoolmaster. Took generally twelve pupils to the church of B——. The church was very large, and the minister's voice was rather weak. He could follow the prayers because he knew them; but he never heard the sermon for seven years.

Edward Astlet is a National Schoolmaster. His boys were very restless in church, for none of them could hear. He was forced to use the cane more than if they could hear. One hour's schooling before church made them more restless still. He wished me not to tell the minister they couldn't hear, for fear he should think it was the fault of his voice.

Mary Stone kept a chandler's shop. Was good friends with the pew-opener; so "once had a stool reg'lar," near the door. Was now a Primitive Christian. Could hear and understand in chapel—little of either in church. Felt welcome in chapel, but felt an unpleasant sensation of being "one too many" in church.

James Kite thought a man could go to heaven with one doctrine as well as another—that the worst of us knew quite

good enough if we would only do it. His opinion of Church was, that every man ought to have a place to rest his back and room to stretch his legs.

George Mason was no bigot about doctrines. Didn't care whether it was in a church or in a chapel, so that he could sit comfortable, and hear and understand. Thought church sermons might be good for scholars and gentlefolks. Used once to attend a village church—there felt as if he had a right to be, as in chapel—kept to his church till "he was frozen out like."

David Lane wasn't particular about doctrines, so that he could hear and edify, and have a proper place and feel somebody. He said there were more of his sort at chapel, not scholars, and preached to like plain people.

This examination I could continue through a volume. The rarest answer of all is, "We disagree with such Church doctrine." No, some Dissenters were born in Dissent, and hearing every one (to justify his schism) abuse the Church, they learnt at last conscientiously to abjure it; but the larger part would say, "I didn't leave the Church, the Church left me;" and he says "I was driven out by the sexton from want of room:" another says, "I was repelled by the preaching too fine for such as me; and nearly all might truly say, "When once I had joined a chapel, certain feelings and privileges, social and secular, formed so large an ingredient in my 'mixed motives,' that by no possible reform could the Church ever get me back again."

There is also another cause of Dissent. In proportion as men and women have strong religious instincts, they want communion. This communion implies sympathy; and, sympathy may be warmed into life where calico fraternises with calico, and corduroy with fustian, and where the minister has only to touch one chord to vibrate throughout all: but, it is very different where rich silks and fine barège fill nine pews out of ten. Remember, what moves tears at Sadler's Wells is sheer bombast at St. James's Theatre. That which, by a "touch of nature," makes all feel akin, is too rare to expect.

Our theatres very aptly illustrate another point: our larger theatres being found too large for acting, are generally reserved for music. People did not like dumb show, or straining their ears to catch distant sounds, so they stayed away; and, large theatres have given place to others of a reasonable size, where the voice will not only reach the ear, but pierce the heart. But, large churches are deserted by the poor, and yet no man suggests the same cause or the same remedy. Many persons will remark, "If we can hear,

the poor can." But this is altogether a mistake: for, our ears are practised: and the subject and language are so familiar, that if we hear three-fourths of a sentence, we can guess the rest: whereas the poor man, if he loses part of the sentence, loses the sense of the whole.

"The lamented Rev. Frederic Robertson, late of Brighton," said a friend, "no one ever could admire more than I did, so long as I sat near enough to catch not only his words, but his intonations; but when I removed to the end of the church I missed the earnestness of his look and the fervour of his heart. He was then quite a different preacher. Sympathy failed, and the effect was comparatively spoilt."

As regards public worship, there has been too little consideration of the habits of the poor. Educated persons are familiar with the subject, and come less to be taught than to be admonished. St. James's or St. Pancras will serve for them, and one voice for two thousand people; and they cannot be too thankful for the privilege. As to that selfish spirit which leaves one church for another from mere preference for a preacher, or as having "a right to consult their own improvement,"—this, with the educated, is a gross violation of all duty, decency, and common sense."

But the size of the church and powers of the preacher may justly be considered by the poor man. For, nearly all he can learn of the tidings of salvation is from the preacher. Therefore, whether it be the poor man's ear or the instrument that is out of tune, still, "if the trumpet give an uncertain sound," the sooner we investigate the cause and apply the remedy, the sooner will the Church act in conformity with its high calling.

But to return to my friend Isaac, and his pound-text energies. I am not going to pay myself, or my Clerical Brethren generally, so bad a compliment as to imply that, with the same freedom from all the ties of taste and etiquette, I could not also cause a fluttering and a tumult under the smockfrocks or cotton handkerchiefs of Giles Digweed the gardener, or Betty Warsop the monthly nurse, of Yatton parish.

I need not describe our blacksmith's shop. Few villages are without one, and nearly all smithies look the same. The smith is one of the earliest mechanics mentioned in history. Remember how the victorious Philistines dreaded the aid the smiths could lend to the Israelites when they were smarting under their defeat.

William Simpson, our Vulcan, was something of a scholar, and a politician too: indeed, Simpson was a man of varied talent. I have known him act Shoemaker by nailing boots. I have known

him act Dentist in the absence of the Union doctor. I have known the same William Simpson act the Lawyer, too—it was to draw up a last will and testament for Tom Davy, the huntsman, who had stored up ever so many capfulls of half-crowns at the savings' bank.

Never did I realise the wisdom of our testamentary laws to save a scramble and to end a strife before William Simpson was thought of, and that will was made. For poor Tom was three days dying: and, besides this, Tom was given over five days more: and, three days' work did his niece Emma, on his wife's side, and his own nephew, Harry, actually lose in watching for the first pounce on the clock, crockery, dresser, and other goods and chattels of the dying uncle. But all such uncivilised notions were frowned away when Simpson laid down the law to them. The parish clerk usually officiates for lack or dread of lawyers, just as the monthly nurse sometimes supplants the doctor.

William Simpson's shed, as a cover to keep off the rain, and with fire to defy the cold, was no bad place for a little talk on parish matters: and, for a really fresh and original piece of conversation, commend me to the wayside wisdom of an intelligent mechanic.—One day, a fatal accident had occurred, a tipsy waggoner having fallen under his wheel, and I had naturally to try my powers, after the manner of Hopkins, to produce a suitable impression upon the awe-stricken rustics who were gathered round.

On these occasions, when nature speaks within us, words from the heart go to the heart, and every clergyman who deserves the name he bears can hold all eyes fixed intently on him. Standing by William Simpson's forge, I have literally seen the red iron grow cold, so spell-bound and riveted has William been, with his hobnailed friends, by every word I have uttered. And yet this same Simpson, when he had his face washed, and Sunday coat on, with red waistcoat and glass buttons, would look up at my pulpit very respectfully perhaps, but not at all as if I were saying anything that very nearly concerned him.

"How is it, sir," he once asked, "that I can listen to you so much better when you are standing against our anvil than up there in that pulpit?"

"Because, William," I replied, "here we talk face to face, and because it is talking—because I am in the mood to talk, and you are equally in the mood to hear—two conditions which are essential to all natural and useful talking. Another reason is, because all I have to do is to interest you and those like you, whereas in the pulpit I must consider the squire, the doctor, some

ladies, and small gentry, all at the same time. For instance, suppose you were to go into our school and mix the good scholars with the bad, how would the teacher get on then?"

"Well, sir," said Simpson, "I begin to understand: for by the time the sermon comes I am not 'in a mood' to hear any more; and you seem tired like, and not in a mood to talk. The Methody ought to beat you with these odds certainly, for he has short prayers to begin with, and then he is fresh, and we are fresh — all fresh and alive together, and ——"

"Stop, Simpson. One point more; if I put you on the top of yonder wall, one hundred and fifty feet off, could you speak easily and naturally then?"

"I see, sir; not talking then, but hallooing—mouthing of some sort—yes, preaching—something not natural. Well, to be sure, this seems reasonable enough, but then the Dissenter ——"

"Yes, the Dissenter's preaching seems an exception—but how big is this Dissenter's chapel?"

"True, his chapel is small. I see now he can more easily and naturally talk to us."

"And, one question more: What kind of congregation has this Methodist? Why, all of one class, where he is really effective."

But I have more to say on this point another time.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CURATE IN HIS LONELY LODGINGS—FORCED TO MARRY IN SELF-DEFENCE.

ALL this time my reader, having walked round my parish, will, especially if a lady, be curious to have a peep at my lodgings. No man depends more on a home than a clergyman. Much of his work must be in-door work. He can rarely visit the sick till he has allowed time for some small cottage duties; and his visits would be equally ill-timed at a late hour. The dinner-time also makes a pause. So, for many hours out of the twenty-four, if a clergyman has no home society and comforts, few persons will miss them more.

I lodged at Weston the farmer's. He was an easy and silent man; not so his wife, who was a scraggy, cantankerous woman. I named her "the bones of contention." The farm-house was in a beautiful valley, about half a mile from the church. Yet, many a fine morning, whilst all nature smiled without doors, there were angry frowns within. My heart used to ache for Polly "Gutter;" so named at the workhouse, because found in one—the poor parish-'prentice, born to a rich estate in cuffs and hard words. Sterne says, though many have thought it was from Scripture, "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." The Almighty also mercifully deadens the senses to the sorrow; so, Polly had no nervous system: and, Polly could bear scoldings as the blacks bear heat: because, born in a clime where nothing else prevails. She had been pounded and moulded to the old workhouse temperature.

Aristotle says shrewdly, that one way to make a man angry is to be most indifferent when he is most in a hurry. Polly had found out that without the help of Aristotle, and said, "Ven missus wants I to go quicker than I can, I puts on a tidy bit slower than I was afore."—Then "missus" would be boisterous, indeed. Yes, it was a charming spot was Weston's farm; but,

"All, save the nature of man, was divine."

So my abode might well have seemed to be an Arcadian retreat, all peace and honeysuckles; whereas I was a martyr to harsh sounds from the mistress's pipes, and bad pigtail from the master's. Polly was my Hebe. Polly "laid my things and did out my room." I had a sitting-room and bed-room up one pair of stairs. An angular cupboard in the corner held all my little creature comforts, —tea, sugar, coffee, and a bottle of spirits; wine was in reserve for my occasional visitors. I kept on good terms with Mrs. Weston. The truth is, I was afraid of her: because, unlike Polly, I had a nervous system: and, to have my pulse irritated up to a hundred beats a minute, whether by woman's tongue or by any other means, is too much wear and tear for my constitution.

Here, then, in this farm-lodging, I was at times almost as dull and solitary as Robinson Crusoe himself. I became fond of Polly as my Mrs. Friday. I always left some tea in my cup, and rarely quite finished my punch, that Polly might drain the glass. Polly tried, though in parish-'prentice style, to return the compliment, and did everything she could think of to show attention: but, what with arranging my books upside down, and making a medley of my papers, these attentions were rather troublesome.

I had very little variety, and scarcely any visiting. I dined at the Rectory every Sunday, but rarely on other days. Jerry Edwards, the steward, and Michael Willis the land-agent, and some of the principal farmers, used to invite me to dine, but I contrived to compound, by taking an early luncheon with them, so that I should not seem to despise their hospitalities. I did not spend an evening out once in six weeks. In the winter months, as I had no horse, the distances and bad lanes rendered the houses of the few country families inaccessible. Therefore, being generally at home, the dead silence of my farm-lodging was for hours unbroken, save by the falling embers and the ticking of the clock; for, the master was asleep by eight o'clock; and mistress, who began her scoldings and driving about before daybreak, was tired out.

All this was favourable to study, but not for sermons. The partitions were too thin for reading aloud; and this is no slight privation: for, I could not practise delivery or extempore language. The sight of Polly Gutter even was a relief; and I am sure I rang for things I was only half inclined to have, just to hear the sound of my own voice in ordering them. Polly's life had been so peculiar that her ideas and feelings were quite a curious study to me. Polly liked to give her notions an airing, too; and as even dogs know their friends, she had generally some piece of talk, domestic or parochial, bursting under high pressure, till she could

stump up to me. Stumping indeed it was, not walking. Fancy a tall, bony girl of eighteen, with hobnailed shoes, a brown stuff dress, made not much fuller than a sack, and with bare arms and red neck, half covered with a yellow handkerchief.

Once she said—I give but imperfectly Polly's dialect—"You heard the noise below-stairs with master a-blowing up missus, didn't you, sir? Well, sir, this was all about the Methody: and why should Methodies always come at dinner-times, just in time for cabbage and bacon extra in the pot? 'A convarting of ye, you calls it!' says master; 'he pretty nearly lives on us! He've a ate up one half the pig, and he'll soon eat up t'other half! I shan't have no more of it!' says master. Ah, and he's in the right! Methodies wouldn't never make a pious job of missus. Not forty wouldn't!"

A few minutes of this kind of gossip formed my only society and conversation, between four o'clock and eleven sometimes, on lonely winter evenings. The result was that I began to feel it was not good for man to be alone, and I was not disposed to be half as particular in my choice as if I had lived in a civilised land. Mrs. Weston made all ladies seem amiable; Polly Gutter made all ladies seem elegant. What my lot wanted in fact was made up by fancy. Dreamland is the merciful inheritance of men of no estate; and a castle in the air produces as pleasurable sensations as a real castle sometimes, and without any of its pains and penalties. No man wants a wife as badly as a parson. The celibacy of the clergy is an absurdity, indeed. It is in vain to keep ladies out of a man's house unless you also keep them out of his head. For, all from want of one actual spouse, my mind was a complete thoroughfare for charming creatures of all forms and figures whom a yearning imagination bodied forth.

St. Paul, our great example, had no wife, it is true. But I was not a St. Paul. Missionaries have been placed amidst scenes so stirring, that all the yearnings of the natural man find vent in a single channel; but this was not my case. Certainly, it is a great fault to depreciate examples of piety, and no less baneful is it to plead for cold indifference; still, we may fairly assert that man's noblest energies and spirit of self-sacrifice require a very tempest of excitement to stir them up. Witness how not a few of the ne'er-do-wells of our country villages, caught half tipsy by a shilling and a ribbon, turned heroes at Sebastopol! Every age has its trials. The said heroes could withstand bullets, but not beer; Mars, but not Bacchus. So, the faith which faces fire and sword, labours, dangers, and suffering, might be damped and de-

moralised by an easy and solitary life—just as a city, impregnable from without, falls a prey to treason and tumultuous spirits from within.

After a time I began to feel moped and dreary.

I now wrote letters to my sisters very frequently, and had as many replies, with all the fid-fad of the home circle; and all these letters contained frequent mention of Miss Ellen Horley. Ellen was a good girl I knew—just such a one as a man's sisters think he ought to marry. But what man can endure the idea of Cupid in leading-strings? "Ellen was not bad-looking; she was amiable, she was managing, she was good-principled, she would make the best of parsons' wives." All this I had heard till I was tired of it. I had also a hint that Ellen was not happy at home, and that I was not likely to be refused. Worse and worse! the path of true love made smooth, indeed! Who wants to hunt a lame hare? If a Miss Hannah More had a lady from the cradle, and a Mrs. Trimmer did the finishing, there is not one man in twenty who would be attracted by that. Attracted! certainly not. "I married your dear mother," said my father, "not for her virtues, but for herself. Indeed, I never thought about her virtues till that crabbed captain's wife came to stay with us and gave me an insight into their cat-and-dog life at the Priory."

This is the way of the world. There is a *je ne sais quoi* that attracts, while all that ensures wedded happiness is a mere make-weight in the balance, "an accessory after the fact." That "something" seemed wanting in Ellen Horley. The fact was, I had seen too much of her. No one is a hero to his *valet de chambre:* no lady is an angel to an every-day acquaintance. I had seen Ellen looking her best and looking her worst; fair and freckled, pale as well as rosy, with colds and coughs, in high spirits and in low spirits; nipped with cold at Christmas, and melting with heat in the dog-days. I had seen Ellen by the side of that beautiful and captivating flirt—yes, a proper flirt, Emma Crofton. Ellen was only mortal; but love pictures the ideal.

There is something very unsatisfactory in plain matter of fact. Hope does far more for our happiness than possession. If man knew the length and breadth of every morsel of happiness he would taste in this world, he would indeed say, "All is vanity." At that time of life I was particularly imaginative, and had my full share of romance and sentiment: so, of course, I was imagining hearts united, sighs responsive, and the female habits of five-and-twenty suddenly melted down and recast to blend, without jar or friction, with my own. I forgot that all this might involve love up one

pair of stairs, a Polly Gutter for a lady's maid, no society within miles, washerwomen and weeding-women only to speak to, muddy lanes to walk in; and, in short, the forcible dislocation of every joint in the poor lady's social and moral nature.

All this time I was in love, and I was only looking for some one to be in love with. Well, why not? Don Quixote conceived chivalrous feelings first, and started in quest of imprisoned maidens afterwards. I had yearnings, and no one to caress; I had sympathies, and no one to respond. I felt at times, or thought I did, one breathing compound of charities, benevolence, amenities, all wasting "their sweetness on the desert air," with visions of fair spirits enough to people Fairyland, and enough soft sighs to turn a windmill.

"Why did Mr. Strange or Mrs. Queer marry such an oddity as they are severally linked to?"

"Because they were in a mood to invest that oddity with a ready-made suit of charms, and only found it was a bad fit afterwards."

However, the question did occur, What were we to marry on? I had expectations, and so had Ellen. Something might drop in on either side; but, however much we are impressed with the uncertainty of life, the moment we depend on an old uncle's *post obit* it seems almost positive that he will live for ever. Still, I felt I must do something to better my condition; because I thought it not like a clergyman to form a habit of spending my evenings out, even if nearer a town. One day, while I was in this state of mind, Dawson, the curate of a neighbouring parish, came in, and we talked the matter over.

"You want a horse," said he. "Having a horse, I find society of some kind, though only to ride into Hamley to have my hair cut, to talk to the bookseller, find a book to read, and back again. Though, really, sometimes I am sadly moped too. Why, last week I was up-stairs in the parlour with my cigar, and Tom was below-stairs in the kitchen with his pipe; and I really had the hardest matter in the world to resist inviting Tom—that's my groom—to bring his pipe up to me; and as it was, I found some pretence for going down to Tom to talk of the horse, or to give some direction, amounting to nothing. But this is not nearly as bad for you, for you are studious. Think of poor fellows like me, who rarely read but as a matter of duty."

"Yes," said Wingfield, another curate, "that's why I am so much afraid of a country curacy. In a town, the clergy keep each other company; an hour or so once a-week breaks the deadening

spell. But a whole winter of long evenings, in a lone farm-house, is enough to turn my brain. We feel not only lonely, but pitifully lonely. Why, Mother Fletcher, at Oak's Farm, would say to me, 'Bless us sir, we feels for you! An't you mazed, or daft, or summut?' If I heard voices, I fancied they were talking of me. Once, when I upset a table, all the family came rushing up-stairs, thinking I was in a fit, and one said, 'No one could wonder, sir, if you was to be.' Actually, little Fanny Fletcher—I used to give her playthings, and amused myself with the child—asked if I was put up there in disgrace! Now, all this is wretched, and makes one sympathise with old Joe Tucker, who said, when I praised the comforts of the Union: 'If you was here you'd find, sir, there are lots of room for a poor mortal to be a-ready to hang his self, all the same he be sure of three meals a-day.'"

"And I have no doubt," rejoined Dawson, "this is where those religious crotchets come from. They result from all this solitary confinement, and I shall call them 'farm-house phantoms.' Really, this may very naturally be deemed one cause of those follies; for, just as if you stare hard at an object till your eyes ache, you will see it out of all proportion; so, if you dwell moodily on one idea, you won't know dreaming from thinking, till at last you make a haunted chamber of your mind."

"Exactly so," said Wingfield; "or, to speak less philosophically, you may brood and cackle over one egg till it's addled."

But all this time I can fancy some censorious advocate of human perfectibility will say, "Then you admit that the clergy are not superior to these mortal follies?"

I reply, that some of the clergy, perhaps, are born monks—all head and no heart, and some are too good and wise. Some men have commanding talents, and are engrossed wholly by one great and noble purpose. I cannot conceive a Sir Isaac Newton with a wife; a Wesley or a Whitefield we should also expect to find "without encumbrances." Yet the Apostle St. Paul took a more practical view, and chose to regard men as men are and ever will be. He said, "I would that all men were as I am," but he knew that "all men cannot receive it."

I am not excusing but describing, and describing one of many, very many, of the ministers of the present day.

It is a great error to quote one name in a century and say, "This romance or folly was unknown to the truly great." One advantage of the truly great in this world is, that our eyes are diverted from their littleness. For the noblest compound of flesh

and blood would shrink into very common-place mortality if seen in all their motives and their weakness precisely as they really were.

Be that as it may, I never pretended to be great. At times I had formed great schemes of usefulness. I had fancied myself sometimes in a foreign land, with hundreds of converted heathens flocking round my banana-tree. But as to mere Englishmen and Englishwomen, this mild and easy sphere of duty has even seemed too easy for my energies. Difficulties so trivial seemed swept away before the torrent of my thoughts, and hundreds of such hearers seemed to be moulded in a month, according to my will. So, all my ideas of a minister were of attack, of progress, of an unflinching onslaught on some powers without—self was to be nothing—the good cause everything.

I confess, then, I felt humiliated when now, for the first time, I was made to feel there were certain unruly powers in my own breast, and a prior conquest to be made within, and that I was precisely the same man after ordination as before. My duties were new, my resolution was new, my motive was new and powerful also, but poor human nature remained in me as fallible as before. I always had delighted in the society of ladies, and I always had indulged in sentimental feelings, and now my mind was like the camp in India,—"in spite of the strictest orders from head-quarters that no ladies should follow, you couldn't enter a bungalow but there they were."

I am now describing my feelings after the first year. The novelty of my position, and the excitement of duty, with long summer evenings and the variety so afforded, did pretty well at first; but then solitude began to tell upon my spirits, and matrimony, as the natural cure for solitude, gradually stole upon my mind.

When once the idea seized me, it grew more vivid and absorbing. Soon my single state was made the cause of every ill that flesh is heir to. It is the same with any prevalent epidemic of the mind, as Thucydides says it was of the plague of Athens,—"All other maladies solve into this." Ellen Horley's mild and placid figure rose day by day more frequently before me. In imagination she made my tea; she stitched my sermon paper; she sat silent and motionless when I was writing; she put down her crochet (I never thought of baby-linen) when I left off, and seemed born to cool my throbbing brain and ease life's burthens when heavy at the heart. The only thing was, Ellen Horley seemed too easy a conquest. Though fond of trout, I like catching

them. Our desires in this world are like the boys' kites: loosen their string, and down they come.

While in this state of mind, I had *such* a letter from my sister Fanny! She could tell me that "others could admire if I could not." There had been a yeomanry ball. One officer had danced twice with Ellen, and called next day and spoke of her to my sisters: and "there was no denying that he did look so well in his uniform" (a pigeon-chested fellow — the tailor had stuffed his breast like a turkey; I was sure of that). "All the ladies had caught the *scarlet* fever. If I had really any idea of Ellen Horley, I had better not delay, or the prize would no doubt be gone."

This letter put me in a fever. I felt a deeply-injured individual. For an utter stranger to step between me and my Ellen — yes, my Ellen, I thought — in this manner, that was provoking, indeed! And Ellen, too! What could she mean? Hadn't she — didn't she ——? No, I couldn't say that; she had not promised me the refusal. No, no; I couldn't say that of her. But — but — but, at least, I had taken it for granted that I could marry her, if I liked; and now I was grievously disappointed.

Ellen's image was now ten times more vivid — ten times more frequently before me. I had been unsettled before: so unsettled, indeed, that I thought I must marry out of principle. Yes, out of principle! At all events, it was quite as much out of principle as many other things that claim to be so done. I allude to that economical morality which hits pleasure and duty with the same stone.

But if before I was unsettled, now I was positively wild — altogether out of tune and unstrung. For three days, I am ashamed to confess how disturbed was my mind, how far from the unruffled temper of a true Minister of the Gospel! I read first one book and then another. First I started out with some object, then I turned round and came back, and, perhaps, wrote half a letter and tore it up again. My fever was at its highest at the time the post was expected. Oh! how hastily did I sally forth to meet old Bony, with his pony and bag and yard of tin, descried upon the Common! At other times I paced up and down my little room, till Polly Gutter asked if I "had not a ramping toothache? Missus said I should wear the floor through; and she couldn't a-bear it."

"And did you not call yourself religiously to account? Did you yield to all this folly without a thought?"

No; it cost me many and many a struggle. Duty, reason, the

pastoral character, resignation—all were present to my mind. I read one morning in St. Paul's Epistle, "No man entangleth himself," but I was entangled. I was in a maze. There was a violent tumult within me; the question was to disentangle, to calm, to assuage—in short, to hasten home and put an end to my distracted state.

While arranging with my Rector, another letter from my sister told me that Ellen had heard a very bad account of this "captain bold," as a *roué* and a gambler: and that though Mrs. Fixham had gone to the expense of a tea-and-negus party on purpose to let him (her nephew) see more of Ellen, the dear girl declined—indeed, she had shown great character in the matter—doubly honourable to her virtues, because her stepmother, Mrs. Horley, did nothing but talk at her and snub her all the day long.

And shouldn't I rescue imprisoned maiden from these cruel bonds? Shouldn't I set her free? Every good, every manly feeling, seemed to urge me on. It did seem so flattering to me that she would not marry every one; and so charming to dote on the happiness I could bestow.

Who hasn't had love-dreams of some seamstress lady bid to stitch no more—some orphan governess restored to all the elegancies a spendthrift father had lost, and owning a benefactor in her spouse?—So changed was the spirit of my dream, I began to think I was going to do some most disinterested act! I could have pictured the cruel stepmother as a coiled-up hydra, Ellen in the centre shrinking for her forked tongue, and myself as the champion to snatch the frightened dove away!

Now shift the scene, push on the clock of time, and fancy me at home—and a consultation with my sisters on ways and means. But would she accept me? "Why, Ellen was a peculiar girl"—my sister "rather thought she admired a different kind of man. Ellen's conversation always made her think so."

Exactly so. This is the way with ladies; in speaking of the tender passion they always try to blind each other. Still, my heart beat nervously again. I didn't then suspect that artifice. I thought such bosom-friends must know.

However, we talked, and talked away, till at last it was quite late. All the house was gone to bed. Our candles were burning to the sockets, and the fire had gone out, and my sister Emily—she had not a spark of sentiment in her whole composition, but was born for an old maid, and never had a beau in her life—Emily, I say, was quite impatient; but Fanny, who had a little affair that really "came to something"—she is a widow with

three children now, and conjugal felicity has worn her to the bone—Fanny could never talk enough.

"You speak of '*must* marry.' 'A clergyman never settled.' Well, with Ellen that will do; she is domesticated, she is. Ellen has been long used to self-denial and to home life. But I know you would rather have Emma Crofton—much you know about it, for Emma would 'settle' you with a vengeance! She is a proper 'settler' for any man. No parsonage would hold her. Anna Singleton is just as bad: another 'settler.' No Polly Gutter must come near Miss Anna. You couldn't thwart her, or you would have her nervous and hysterics (that's French for blubbering) all day."

"But, at all events, Mary Downs is another 'settler,' worse than any. Mary Downs would positively ruin you. She takes care of nothing, locks up nothing, mends nothing. I wouldn't do her darning for a trifle. Country balls are necessaries of life for all these girls. They will flirt with anybody.—Then, Kate Anson is another 'settler.' Kate would turn a man's house out of window if he dared oppose her. He must also provide her with admirers. I never saw such vanity in any girl as in Kate. I know you would say she is accomplished. This I admit. Kate could play by the hour, but there is no pleasure in that when your wife is all the while in 'a fit of the pouts.'"

"Yes but, Fanny, when once a girl is married ——"

"That is a mistake, Harry. Girls, when married, do not change their nature. Good tempers, perhaps, become bad and soured by more trouble than they can bear, but no bad nature becomes much better. Girls who are selfish while single are selfish when married. No, no. How seriously you talk, Harry, of marrying, and of having some one to comfort and assist you in the secluded duties of a clergyman's life! You say you feel 'unsettled and good for nothing.' How should you like to be more unsettled and good for less?"

"But," I said, "do you think any wife would not be a great assistance, and ——"

"Assistance! Why, some wives want—yes, and have, more time and attention than all the parish put together. There's the Rector of Splashy appointed to the cure of his fat wife; the Archdeacon of Windward's shovel-hat and all cannot keep Mrs. W. in awe—always tacked on to him, and devising dinner-parties to show off her High-Church dignity and her highly-polished plate. Now you, Harry, are nervous, excitable, feeling, and sympathetic: drops of comfort would be the making of you,

but there are such things as 'acidulated drops.' Trickling water wears stone, but dropping vinegar would reduce your whole nature to a state of decomposition. And, just consider: how would you write sermons, all loving-kindness and charity, yourself made as sour and peevish as ——?"

Here Fanny was running on with all that fertility of illustration so plentiful with ladies when the talk is of matrimony. But the unsentimental Emily would wait no longer, but drew her sister Fanny off to bed, and sent me to my room, a more excited but a wiser man. Once more I thought, prudent or not prudent, "out of principle" I must try to secure such a treasure as Ellen. Yes, once more "out of principle." So, men decide from impulse first, and feel much flattered in finding things square with their principles afterwards!

But the crisis was a solemn one. First of all, in a tumult of conflicting feelings which gained power from the morbid influence of a lonely life,—"solitary confinement turns the brain,"—I thought I could not keep my ordination vow,—that I was demoralised for my office, so long as I was a single man: and now, the remedy I saw was a hazardous one. I might join myself to one who daily would tempt me from the paths of duty! I might repose in the lap of a Delilah, who would shear me of my strength! My dear mother's opinions of modern education—as a thing of the toes and fingers' ends, and very little of the head or the heart —all rushed upon my mind. Ellen, I knew, she would prize, while most of the young ladies around were her aversion; and as I thought what would be my mother's anxieties if she knew the great issue at stake, and how she would talk it over to my father, I could not but repeat audibly these beautiful words:—

"And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life, because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, *such as these which are* of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?"

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I returned to Yatton parish, to Mrs. Weston's farm, and the untutored society and sentiments of Polly Gutter, very, very happy, because—engaged to Ellen Horley!

CHAPTER IX.

ARRANGING FOR MY MARRIAGE — MY WEDDING, AND SETTLING DOWN — AUNT AND HER MAID JOIN HOUSEKEEPING IN A NEW CURACY — CLERICAL VAGARIES — THE RICH MAN'S FUNERAL — OUR FAMILY COMPACT DOES NOT ANSWER.

At the passing of the New Poor Law, when prudence and preventive checks were to do everything, when some looked to lectures on political economy to make future John Hobsons delay putting up the banns with future Sally Browns — the instinct and erratic part of man and woman were often left out of those ingenious equations of the meal to the mouths and the babies to the pap.

Certainly, I ought not to have married without reasonable expectations. But what are "expectations?" What is "reasonable?" — An Irishman is happy on a hundred a-year, though only for one year: the labourer has no anxiety while he can see a week's wages a-head; but, in genteel life, few could eat with an appetite to-day, if wholly without provision for this day twelvemonths. My father said, "Wait for a living, and then wait one year after that to insure your life, and secure a capital." Aunt Charlotte said, "Ellen is such a good Christian girl, things must go well. I would strain a point — I would trust in Providence."

"Nonsense!" said my father; "that is only a specious way of saying 'chancing it.' This is not trusting Providence, it is tempting Providence. Pupils help a little, but ——"

"Pupils are always in the wife's way," said my mother. "Mrs. Worley tried it till there was an insane cousin to take care of, and then she was glad to change."

"Horrible," said Aunt Charlotte, "to turn a rectory first into a school, and then into a lunatic asylum!"

"Ellen is pretty well broken in," said my father; "she is kept as strict as a school-girl. And as to lunatics, her stepmother is most crazy."

"Yes," said Fanny, "Ellen cannot change for the worse; and as to Harry, he is moped to death."

"I am quite disappointed," said Aunt Charlotte. "Ordination has not altered Harry in the least. With all his good resolutions he is sentimental and nonsensical, like other people."

Yet, all the while, my aunt had a secret plan of her own. Her piety would find a sphere in my parish.—"The charming young clergyman" and her early disappointment were not forgotten."—She would like to "chew the cud of pleasures past," and enjoy the reflected sunshine of a happy couple.—She could help in the parish.—Her income would pay the housekeeping, and her maid Susan would "make herself generally useful."

The only thing wanted was a curacy with house and sole charge. My mind was then to be free from all possible care—my idea of "feeling settled" realised, and "Harry was to be such a minister —— so devoted—so exemplary that ——" that, in short, an Aunt Charlotte and a maid Susan should give the idea of quite a new order of Deaconesses in the Church.

Sister Emily (who, I said, never had a beau) caught at the plan; but Fanny quizzed it cruelly—she imagined my wedding tour, with Aunt Charlotte riding bodkin and Susan in the rumble.

Then she pictured us at home—Susan snubbing Ellen, and Aunt Charlotte expecting that, with all delicate attentions, the eldest should be served first. She was also very jocose about "love and lookers-on;" and said it were such an apology for a wedding, that Venus would turn up her nose and Master Cupid make faces at us.

However, we were both in love—over head and ears; and what mortal in love could ever see beyond the hour? The present is everything, the future nothing. Could I once clasp the loved one to my heart, all the troubles that could befall me seemed but as motes in those sunbeams, which were to cheer me for a life.—But, no poor creature, begging for money to put the bailiff from his doors, ever went with more sinking heart or stammering lips to tell his piteous tale, and mark the lights or shades each word would throw upon the brow, than I to break this plan to Ellen. What an offer! Not a home—but halves! Not be mistress of a house, not to call the maids her own, not ——. However, the story came out at last. Ellen heard it all with laughing, liquid eyes, and then, for the first time, midst tears and smiles, and kisses too, I heard how cruel was the state I had persuaded her to change.

She had been living without love—without affection—without any, the very least, response to the yearnings of a fond and throbbing heart. That heart was early taught to love: her dear mother, up to her sixteenth year, had been to her a sister, playfellow, and parent, too: and she, with that fond mother, had caught the sighs and shared the sorrows of affection chilled to icicles by a cold and selfish husband. Providence has hard blows for hard hearts. One day, of cruel and cutting speeches, that husband flung himself from his wife's presence and his home; ordered his portmanteau; where he was going wouldn't say; nor when, if ever, he should return. Thus savagely did he leave a tender woman to—for so it was—the pangs of labour: and instead of that soothing affection on which the youthful mother would repose, yearning as for nature's own support, he left her, pierced to the very soul—the wife—the woman lacerated—convulsively to sob and sigh alone!

Six days passed—an infant was announced still-born—the wife in extreme danger—all the neighbours were called on to conjecture how the husband could be found. "The husband only can save her," said the surgeon; "I cannot minister to a mind diseased. Send—in the name of mercy find him."—Two days Ellen saw her mother lie poised, as on the turning of a hair, between this world of sorrows and—she never doubted it—another world, to her of joys for evermore. Two days, poor Ellen heard her call on the cruel husband's name: "What have I done? What have I done?"—The doctor was an old, kind-hearted man; that husband's heartlessness he had long abhorred; and as long regarded this distracted mother with the pity that is akin to love. To every neighbour—and not one but galloped up from miles around to inquire—he made but one answer: "Find the husband, to speak some words of kindness and of comfort in her ear; though even that seems now too late." Every one that came vented their horror in words both loud and deep, and letters upon letters were written and a dispatch sent off, as each was eager to suggest some new address. Still, as the husband moved from place to place, no letter came to hand; when, one morning, opening the *Times*, he read among the deaths,—

"On the —— day, in child-birth, Ellen, the wife of Thomas Horley, Esq., of Bowdon Hall."

A volume could hardly tell the conflicting feelings of the guilty man, or the indignation of the neighbours. Neighbours, indeed! Every cottager, be sure, talked as he passed with "bated breath," and looked reproaches, or he fancied such. It is to Ellen our history must turn. There now was no one she could love; even

for her dearest mother she must weep in silence; for, every sob should touch her father to the heart. No doubt she had some female friends to let her pour forth her grief. This once or twice, perhaps; for there is a limit to such indulgence. All persons have sorrows of their own, and so are glad to make the most of any lull or calm, and can spare few tears for such as Ellen, more than for any tragedy on the stage. All doors are open to the happy and the prosperous, but the afflicted soon find that when their trouble has lost its novelty it has lost its charm, and has no more claim to throw a gloom upon a morning call.—"Don't walk this way, we shall meet poor Ellen: it makes me miserable to look on her—we can't comfort her."

So people say. But still they *could*. Grief can relieve itself in words, and so digest its sorrow and find diversion during those appointed hours of trial, while the warm gushes of the heart, of late thrown back upon their throbbing fountain, are struggling and gurgling for new channels.

Mr. Horley, after twelve months' "complimentary mourning"—most expressive term!—added to Ellen's other afflictions a step-mother. A step-mother, from the *injusta noverca* of Virgil and the more ancient "step-mother to ships"—for so Æschylus called the boisterous sea about Sebastopol—have had no enviable name. Very hard upon them. Step-daughters are no luxury. They talk saucily of their "Step," cast depreciating glances on their "old Pa," and, by looks at least, tell the lady—as proud of her conjugal degree as other ladies—she is an interloper, and they would rather have her room than her company.

This time Mr. Horley caught a tartar. "You can't break my heart, Mr. Horley," the lady once said, patting her stomacher; "it's in a very strong case, I can assure you. Yes, you may launch thunder from your tongue and flash lightning from your eyes, Mr. Horley; but all that goes for nothing. When you have done I shall have my little say." And her "little say" was something fearful. "Never ending, still beginning." Ellen would take a walk to escape it, and find her still at it when she returned. Why, she would bother a rookery. "Daren't strike me, Mr. Horley," and "I am afraid of no man's tongue," she would say; "and if I talk all night, you shall know my mind." "Fair—words—will—an—swer—best, Mis—ter—Horley," she would say, vexatiously. "I am like Queen Elizabeth to the 'Proud Prelate,' 'Yours as you demean yourself;' so please not to hoist your foul-weather flag. I've my mother's own proper spirit. When her first husband once smashed all the cups in his rage, she

smashed all the saucers. Poor dead Mrs. Horley! too good for this world. You should have had me *first*, Mr. Horley. Parcel of silly women! I gave my *hand* for a settlement; but my heart must have a heart in exchange, and that's more than Mr. Horley has got to offer. So far quits. You want a strong-minded and impulsive female to encounter you, Mr. Horley."

There was one beautiful sprig of the purest pearls, fit emblem of the pure heart of Ellen's mother, which used for many a year of sorrow to throb beneath it, while Ellen would rest on her lap, and feel and trace the several pearls with her curious little fingers. When older, she could discern the cruel cause that made those pearl flowers heave and tremble. Think not that Ellen's trials were little, because it was among the greatest to see that pearl upon another's breast.

With such a life, no wonder that Ellen, as my sisters said, looked aged. Trials that blanch the hair in a night soon blanch the cheek; and tears, as years, fret wrinkles, at those heart-wrenching times, when many dark chapters of the book of life are read and realised, and all got by heart in as many days. This was the history of the sober, the steady, the subdued, and — once to me — the unromantic Ellen.

Reader, you have felt a nipping, blighting day of early spring, when all creation is dark and chilled — when the violet and the crocus seem shrinking from your gaze, the birds are chary of their song, and the air not genial for your breath. Reader, you have felt, a few days later, a warm and glowing breeze from the south, when the buds open, the birds sing merrily, all nature seems teeming and expansive till "the valleys laugh and sing." — Such was the difference between the timid and disheartened Ellen, shrinking from the north-east aspect of the second Mrs. Horley, and Ellen all herself, her heart freely gushing, and her whole soul enlarged as she poured forth its generous emotions in the ear of one she dared to love.

My aunt's proposal she received with thankfulness. Her mother's fortune she knew must one day be hers, and I must inherit a little, too. She would make any effort — sacrifice there was none to make. Her present lot was one which resignation only made endurable; but, now that she had once suffered herself to look beyond, she felt it bitterness, indeed, to contemplate the same again. I must find another curacy and exchange letters in the meanwhile, with sometimes a visit home, and — hope and imagination should fill up the rest of the dreary void that separated her *from me*.

Behold me once more at Yatton — enjoying no more lively dissipation than Sunday dinners *tête-à-tête* with Mrs. Thomas, for, the Rector was ill, and kept his bed; the beginning of the end to him — passing long and lonely evenings, with an occasional word to Polly Gutter, and holding village dialogues under the blacksmith's shed, or threading my way up and down rather ladders than stairs to superannuated ploughmen and washerwomen. I had always two or three young persons in consumption to attend, as from sentence of death pronounced by the doctor to release from suffering by the hand of God. To these poor creatures I always spoke cheerfully, as if they lay under judgment of death with a merciful season of preparation.

This formed my life actually. But man lives two lives: one the present and the *actual*, of which he thinks but little; the other the *ideal* of a happy, hopeful future. This second life — the ideal life — now was mine, and I lived, or rather dreamed, in a state savouring very little of our plain prosaic existence. However, it was positive happiness while the spell remained unbroken. Writing or receiving letters from my Ellen was my recreation. When I received one of her treasured epistles I would carry it about in my pocket, and read it again and again, till it was creased all over like a beggar's petition. One day, Isaac Simpson caught me in the act down Froggy Lane, and said, "Now, sir, I guess that's from your sweetheart. I can always tell by a man's face when 'tis a bill." — The Church newspapers were also read by me, and by Ellen too, and even Aunt Charlotte and Susan were on the alert, and had learnt to inquire about preferment at every clerical decease or mention of a curacy. I had by this time taken Priest's orders, and cemented old clerical friendships and made new. It was then that I first heard of the declining health of that good, sanguine, earnest creature, the Rev. Arthur Griffin.

Poor old Griffin commenced life as Chaplain to the Lord Mayor of London. But he retained nothing of civic life but some pleasant stories. He had a soul above carving venison (once the Chaplain's post) and asking a blessing, as he said, on gluttony and drunkenness. The good man had done strange duties, in the absence of others, in the modern Babylon. He had even attended *living* men and women to the grave for passing forged one-pound notes; and, right happy was he to get the sound of St. Sepulchre's eight-o'clock bell out of his ears, and retire to the living of Greenside, in Dorsetshire.

If the Gospel is the "voice of good tidings," dear old Griffin's were the lips to proclaim it. He seemed himself so happy, as if

he were himself all the better for the mercy. He was a man who, by his cheerful serenity and goodness, appeared pre-eminently one "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows"—a man of perfect sympathies. He knew all his flock, and called them all by their names. He was many a summons out of the pocket of the justice's clerk, and many a six-and-eightpence from the lawyer's: and, the story was told, that he once tossed a bunch of carrots to a poor donkey in the pound, and ate his own boiled beef with potatoes. But now he had a "sentence of death" in himself; his lungs were affected, and repose and change of air were prescribed, for, Greenside would not suit his constitution. No wonder: some of the rooms struck damp as a dungeon. Every folio on his shelves was stained by the damp, and my shoes soon turned mouldy in his closets.

We were not long in coming to an arrangement. His large rambling house of furniture and a hundred a-year, after mutual inquiries, were promised, with sole charge to me.

"You shall have the house all as it stands," he said. "I will not remove anything you can possibly make use of; so let us see what there is for you. These pigeon-holes have tracts, and 'Dairyman's Daughters,' and also prayers. Those prayers I am particular in pasting up somewhere in each cottage. Then there are about threescore of Testaments and Prayer-books—sell them cheap where you can, or pretend to sell them; they will be less valued if nothing is paid for them. Next, there is a lot of medicine in this cupboard—castor-oil, purgatives, and lowering medicines. But, let me caution you never to give lowering medicines with parish pay, for then they are lowered enough already. Also, there are five hot-water cases—for bellies full of raw turnips, sloes, or cider-apples, very useful. Nurse Gingham has four sets of baby-linen of mine—with odd blankets, and two pairs of crutches, and some bandages for broken heads."

In this way we went round the house. When we had sat down in the study the old man said, "One thing I wish—I wish you had been here before. My curate, Hixon, did play such games. Bad workmen find fault with their tools. Instead of old things practicable, Hixon was always after new. He wanted to push on the clock of time, and had no idea of fitting his fancies to the stage of civilisation; for, you will find them next to savages, poor creatures, with cabins instead of houses, no decency, and quite in a state of nature. Hixon tried platform-meetings, deputations, converting the blacks at the antipodes instead of the whites round the corner, to say nothing of foreign charities for warming-pans

to the West Indies, and all kinds of moonshine schemes: but—you'll hear all about him. He meant well, I allow. But, take my advice, young man, take care of your own parish first; though, some one missionary scheme will help your parish—creating an interest and realising Gospel blessings. Your Bible and Prayer-book, if your heart's in the cause, is all the machinery you will want. Mind the school, you'll do most with the young. Hixon has tried the agricultural plans, and maid-servant-training plans, and all kinds of plans he ever chanced to hear of: but you'll see—you'll see before you have been here many days."

The Rev. James Hixon was, as the Americans say, a "caution" to a man, and a caution much wanted. His plain duty was to read, to preach, and to exhort, to visit the sick, and to teach the children. Instead of that, Mr. Hixon did everything else he could think of. While seeming to seek God's glory he sought his own. His motive was not piety, but ambition. He wasted his time, if not with sports of the field, with sports of fancy. His views were of that enlarged kind, which rested only on great schemes and extensive organisations: he aspired to some world-wide system, revolving round himself as the centre. And the result was, he was so busy about preaching the Gospel to all the world, that he might have lived and died without improving one single person in it. Shakspeare says, very beautifully:—

> "To thine own self be true,
> And it shall follow, as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man."

"Be yourself religious," and you will not catch at every novelty that offers something more interesting than plain parochial duties.

The Tempter sets before us baits ecclesiastical as well as secular. Time was when balls, and hunts, and amusements of all kinds were the best of baits; but now the hook must be better covered—"In vain is a net spread in the sight of any bird." Conscience touches a man when he is doing nothing at all, or nothing clerical. Accordingly,—

Bait the first was a platform-meeting, a deputation to entertain, speeches to get up, and country visits to make to collect the people. Many weeks of dissipation may be caused in this way. A most insidious bait was this, because not one of our excellent societies could apparently make its cause known without such meetings. But, all depends upon the time, place, and motive;

and, Greenside was as little ripe for such meetings as it is for the Philosophical Association.

Bait the second was an agricultural school. Here were farmers to consult, other seed than the "word" to sow, and visible crops instead of invisible.

Bait the third was the churchyard to level, the church to renovate, painted glass, mediæval curiosities, and the like.

In short, every ingenuity was exercised by poor Mr. Hixon, to provide himself with something as like clerical duty in sound, but as unlike it in sense and savour, as anything possibly could be.

Bait the fourth was a system of clerico-political meetings, the clergy meeting periodically in chapters, agitating Church questions and the rights of the Church; that is to say, the rights of gentlemen, like Mr. Hixon, to the same political influence, and to command the same confidence in the Legislature, as, in my belief, we should very readily command, if we all stood before the laity in the winning attitude of the good Mr. Griffin. The Church has duties as well as rights, and the shortest way to obtain the one is to discharge the other. I have seen some fifty clergymen drawn away from their parishes, with an archdeacon at their head, to vote, protest, or speechify, and append fifty names to a sheet of foolscap. I have seen this many times these last twenty years, and perhaps never without hearing plain people say—and say truly, as the results showed—"They had better be minding their parishes."

"I'll tell you what," said the old man, as he stirred up his glass of negus, "people say 'The Church is in danger.' Hixon was always saying, 'The Church is in danger.' Yes, in danger; I could have said, from such as you. When I was young, the steady serious clergy used to work, and the good-for-nothing used to hunt and shoot: but now, even the steady are beguiled by hobby-horses, hunt shadows, and fire away with blank cartridge and clerical flash-in-the-pan. And this is the worst kind of idleness of the two by a great deal; because, it is the most hopeless and the most insidious. These Mr. Hixons do 'their own will under pretence of their Master's will.' They don't learn the page that is set them, but the very next: like the wayward child. So the Church *is* in danger: when the clergy are losing weight and laughed at, as they ever will be, when every man's views are in the future and in the distance—and the more talk the less work. There was a good old Puritan proverb, that 'The way to make a clean town is for every man to sweep before his own door;' so, the

way to make a pure Church is for every man to mind his own parish."

And here I say of clerical meetings and open expressions of social rights, not that they do no good, but that for the last twenty years I have seen them do no little harm. Once start a young clergyman in a career of politics, or put him on the bench of magistrates, and the natural man begins to breathe again. Once more I say, *A man may be half a doctor, or half a lawyer, but he cannot be half a minister of Christ.* The Tractarians have re-published this truth, which the Evangelical party were the first to enunciate. Young clergymen, it is true, want amusements as they want food. If the Apostle said, "Take a little wine for thy stomach's sake," we may as reasonably say, "Take a little diversion for thy brain's sake," and a mere walk is not always *diversion.*

Still, the mind of a minister must be wholly devoted to his duty, and his recreations must be, as the term implies, the means of sending him back refreshed and strengthened the better to discharge that duty. The clergy must be men to "adorn" the Christian doctrine, and ensamples of godly life. Personal piety is "the one thing needful:" without it the lips speak, but not the heart. This is the faith that "removes mountains" of difficulty. Men great in this faith and piety may or may not have votes, but they always must have influence.

The following is no uncommon case. A clergyman is ordained to a parish, and finds the life before him one of severe self-denial and of a kind of labour quite new, and not always quite congenial, to the tastes and habits of his college days. Accordingly, the struggle commences between his pleasure and his duty,—the enjoyment of this world, and preparing sinners for a world to come: still, he sees no choice but to persevere: he has too much conscience wilfully to desert the post of duty, and after a little practice he is encouraged at finding that the quiet routine of parish duty has pleasures of its own.

All of a sudden, he receives a visit from a certain bustling set of clergy, who are found on every platform and public meeting, and take upon themselves to represent "the Church" in their locality—men who have a motion to make at every public meeting, and an amendment to every motion which does not originate in themselves. They inform our young friend that "his rights and privileges are in danger—some Bill must be opposed—the clergy want a regular organisation for their voices to be heard," and the like. The poor man is quite refreshed at the sound, and

before long finds the new work so much more to his liking than the old that he turns clerical politician, and dreams of "the Church," but forgets his parish. The result is a character utterly devoid of all that devotion and piety which alone carry the word to the heart—utterly devoid, too, of that moral influence which commands the confidence of any Parliament.

Every member of the Legislature daily sees some ten of the clergy residing around him. Every member knows whether the word or the world lies deeper in the hearts of those ten. And in proportion as they see the clergy like old Mr. Griffin, in that proportion will they lose that jealousy with which, it cannot be denied, they now regard the claims of the Church.

Look at our 17,300 clergy; or, which is more easy, look at the first twenty of them around you. How many of these twenty produce an impression as ministers of Christ? How many are mere Church dignitaries? how many are mere country gentlemen? I am sorry to say that, though all would like to count as "the Church," when there's any privilege to be enjoyed, some are very little of the Church as regards any distinctive character that they maintain.

"But," continued the Rector, after awhile, "you are going to be married. I leave Jane—she has been twelve years with me—a capital servant for you; she knows the characters of all the parish—my factotum, quite. Pray keep her. She would break her heart at leaving Greenside: for, Jane is as devoted to the people as I am myself."

To this I readily agreed, and informed Ellen by that day's post of what a treasure of a servant I had secured. The Rector's Jane and my aunt's Susan would, no doubt, be invaluable together.

I was now in the highest spirits—Ellen had only to name the day, and Aunt Charlotte to settle with her landlord and prepare to move from Blindham. My sister Emily—for I would not have Fanny; Fanny quizzed too much, and wasn't sympathetic—came to help me to put all to rights, and to ensure the most comfortable reception for my bride. Emily routed out every corner from kitchen to garret. I remembered afterwards, that the first night she thought that somebody smelt strong of gin. However, since there was no one but Jane to smell, the observation passed unheeded. In six weeks all bridal preparations were made, and the happy day dawned at last. We were made a spectacle and a gazing-stock in the usual way. While at the altar, Ellen stood within one flag-stone of her mother's grave!

The marriage service alone was quite enough to make us

realise the most critical moment of our lives. Still we had to sit up at breakfast and stand the heartless gaze of four-and-twenty, chiefly old fogies, people of more fashion than feeling, and most wicked unbelievers in all pure affection. I felt their brazen looks were truly painful as they sat continually staring at my dear motherless bride, and then—as if it were no trial for a sensitive mind to leave the home of her childhood, and a scene so hallowed by the memory of one no more—she had to run the gauntlet of Vanity Fair to the carriage, and to give each of the four-and-twenty one stare more.

It was now the month of August, and as Ellen had never seen Oxford, our "Sentimental Journey" I resolved to make yet happier by the interest she would feel in all my haunts in days gone by, and the delight with which I should revive associations past. Oxford is retirement itself in the long vacation. We had the place all to ourselves: so, we sauntered about the College gardens, and astonished no one but the blackbirds: though, in term time, Ellen would have been looked at like the Queen. Every old haunt, I felt, I must see with Ellen. On Cowley Green and Bullingdon we walked together, and I pointed out, "Here was our tent, and here the Cricket-ground; here men shouted as I hit about the Christ-Church bowling; there stood the hurdles leaped so often upon Oxford hacks."

Some other evening, I would row her down the river, and describe the boat-races, and my heart and Ellen's would beat with excitement as I described the tearing struggle of a dozen eight-oars, and the "bumps" and the starting—"Are you all ready, gentlemen?" Yes, and the false starts, too—"No—no—wait a bit." Some one used always to be crying "wait," even when the pistol was fired to start us. Of course, we went to the Duke of Marlborough's, and I told the story of Charlie Lane and his notions of modern history; for, Charlie thought the battle of Blenheim was fought in Woodstock Park. In this way we passed a week in quiet lodgings in St. John Street. Indeed, we wanted quiet, both of us. For the days that precede a wedding make me think, with Ovid,—

"Love is a matter full of anxious fear."

There are many persons who imagine that courtship ending with the wedding-day is as one mantling cup of bliss, gradually filling till it foams over. But Ellen declares that the meddling and interference, and the impudent advice of morning callers—the doubts and dampers from those who throw cold water upon

everything—the nervous and superstitious feeling that something will happen to prevent, and the haggling about settlements, all kept her in one painful state of hurry and flurry to the last moment. Besides this, she said it seemed very hard, but she was made to feel quite secondary in the preparations, as if her wedding was the mere occasion for Mrs. Horley's display and party, and something for her to talk of; quite as if our happiness were wholly beside the question, and as if the interesting couple were the mere Punch and Judy to amuse the guests, who seemed to think themselves very important, entirely devoted to their own amusement.

The honeymoon was already in its last quarter—for, I could be absent only a parson's week of thirteen days. Aunt Charlotte and Susan had joined Emily at the Rectory, and had taken possession: and Susan and Jane had also begun to exchange their confidences, and Jane had not failed to represent herself as a kind of woman in possession of master's goods and chattels, and one who "knew what's what," and if other people didn't like their situation they might go!

This Ellen heard from Emily, and Emily hinted there were peculiar difficulties resulting from taking old servants. Susan, she had heard, was aunt's mistress, ruling her on an approved system of sulks and frowns, and short answers: and since aunt, like other old maids, for lack of real troubles, made up in fidgets and fancies in herself, what she was spared in rickets and measles in possible babes; and since aunt also thought that Susan alone could stand between her and constant hysterics, our domestic entanglements seemed anything but easy of solution. However, we tried to laugh it off, and said all would shake right no doubt.

Now, it may seem strange that so slight a matter could affect the happiness of so blissful a season; but the truth is, that we both began to feel anxious for the end of the honeymoon. For, whenever there is a difficulty, it is hard to rest till we grapple with it, and turn the goblin into thin air.

And now, all Greenside was expecting the young couple. If we were Mrs. Horley's puppets before, we were doomed to swell "Mrs. Jane Hayward's" parochial consequence now. So, Jane marshalled the school-children; Jane ordered out the ringers; Jane made an arch of evergreens; Jane also ordered a cask of beer for all *her party* to drink our health. My dear aunt was horrified, and proposed tea; but, before the torrent of Mrs. Jane Hayward's energies, both aunt and Susan bent as stubble before

the wind, and the surging billows of Mrs. Hayward, now flanked with many a noisy partisan, passed clean over them both.

Words cannot describe how cruel was this trial to that dear good lady. My poor aunt had dreamt of this hour as the happiest moment of her life. She had lived for this hour, ever since our first engagement. Her kind heart had throbbed with emotion as she thought of the moment when she should soberly and piously thank God that she had been the means, for once in her life, in this vale of misery, of bidding two dear young people share her home and be happy.

The hardest thing to command or devise, for yourself or others in this uncertain world, is one happy hour. You may provide the viol, the tabret, and the dance, and make every arrangement for joy and merriment, but the least thing will put it all out of tune and harmony: so, this boisterous, good-for-nothing jade, was ordained to break the happy spell, and to rob the generous lady of her reward. For, no sooner did we reach the village than a vulgar noisy mob—as Susan said, "all the scum and scurf of Greenside"—took the horses from the carriage and dragged us, swaying dangerously from side to side, down the lane to the Rectory.

There stood "Mrs. Hayward," with her arms a-kimbo, very red in the face, in a wonderful state of excitement, filling up the doorway, so that poor aunt, and even Susan, were peeping, nervous and confounded, over her shoulder; and Mrs. Hayward was the first to pronounce the *fiat* of her welcome and admission into the Rectory of Greenside.

I was too much flattered at the time by Jane's good intentions, as I thought, to say much of her peculiar way of honouring us, though I did find Mrs. Hayward exceedingly hard to shake off that evening: still I hoped, when the exciting day had closed, all would go well. Ellen was tired by the journey and overpowered by my aunt's kind preparations, so all this tumult gave her pain. However, she set herself to compose the good lady, and said how happy she should be in such a home; and as soon as I had dispersed the people from the door, and made a short speech on the occasion, we enjoyed what aunt had prepared for us, and then all retired to rest.

When Ulysses, after all his wanderings, joined his Penelope at last, Homer tells us that they did not go to sleep till they had talked over all their trials. Just so did I and Ellen. Woman has one sense more than man; and Ellen's intuitions told her there was something wrong with aunt, and we should hear more

of Mrs. Hayward. This proved too true. Aunt had smelt gin as well as Emily, but thought that gin it could not be; but Susan thought nothing more likely, and while aunt's thoughts were yet in an unsettled and fluid state, Susan churned them into pats, and told her mistress how "that pious parson's maid was fond of drink."

What! this confidential servant of the Rectory! What! she who acted as private secretary or clerk, and spared the good old man so much needless interruption! She who presented the petitions of some, and answered "No good" to others—this parochial Lady Chamberlain fond of vulgar gin! It could not be!

However, two days after I sallied out to consult Will Atfield, a small farmer and publican. Atfield heard my cautious kind of question and let me tell my sad suspicions, and then laughed outright and said, "Well, sir, I wins my glass of grog and no mistake! Old master was no match for Jinny. She has such a smooth tongue—and, what's more, she can talk better and straighter when she's drunk than many can. So master couldn't see it, and no one dared tell him. She's the terror of the place, is Jinny Hayward. No poor body could get a message to master that didn't treat or flatter Jinny; but I bet Will Jones a glass of grog that in one month you'd find her out."

"But is she really addicted to drink?"

"Yes, sir. Jinny not only likes a drop, as you and I might, but she's what we call 'a reg'lar wet soul,' and an uncommon bad'un, in all ways; and till she's clear of the place you'll do no good whatever!"

In three days, I was more than satisfied of this unpleasant truth, and Mrs. Jinny was sent bag and baggage out of Greenside. When once a favourite falls, all honeyed lips spout gall, and I was forcibly reminded of Juvenal's account of the disgrace of Sejanus —every one who so late had trembled at the name must have a fling at him; so Jinny's misdeeds were made the most of for a month. This was a warning to me to use my own eyes and ears, and to let no such confidant stand between me and my parishioners for the future.—Many a parish has a Jinny Hayward, male or female, the pest or the terror of the whole neighbourhood.

We were now quite cheerful. Aunt was herself again, and set about in earnest to make my study sacred to sermons, and to act lady-visitor without. Her only mistake was, that she kept forgetting I had a wife; and after pushing Ellen into the background she would remember, with a burst of apologies to the bride, and half an hour after do the same again.

I was now apprehensive of something unpleasant occurring. I knew that a young wife could be jealous even of a sister or of an old nurse, and I found it would not do at all to quote my aunt on all occasions. Already she was becoming a bugbear, and one of Ellen's spirit would rather part with a finger than be robbed of the full honours of a bride.

Accordingly, I prevailed on Ellen to agree to give up to aunt a certain portion of the parish duties, reserving the housekeeping in-doors, and quite as much out of doors, as she could manage for herself.

All seemed smooth once more. Aunt sallied forth on her message of mercy day after day, and inquired so sympathetically into the wants of the people, that they soon found enough to keep her charity in practice. Every one pretended to be thankful for her tracts; though it afterwards appeared not one in two could read them. Every one was proud of the lady's visit, and, by degrees, scarcely any pleaded guilty to possessing coals, blankets, soap, candles, gruel, or any of the necessaries of life.

Morning and noon, aunt was full of her discoveries. She said it was most providential she had come. How they existed before, she did not know. Every day she alone had put the wolf from the door. First of all, only one wife was in tears from bad usage, but now, "shocking bad husbands" was a general complaint. A head was out at every door, as the well-meaning lady passed along, and she often found Molly Sweet listening to hear what she promised Betty Gripe. Jealousy raged like a plague. She couldn't "do what she would with her own." It was "Please, ma'am, you gave she twice as much." And soon each denial threatened impudence; and passion let out truth. "Please, ma'am, Grace Smith have a werry good husband. 'Tis she as puts gin in her tea."—"Aye, and when John have come home with the backache, Sall's beer is many a meal out of he's inside."—"Yes, ma'am, and Hannah Hill com'd over you. She told me as your pretty tract was only good for a kettle-holder."

Of course the village was becoming pauperised. "Yes," said Mr. Elways, the surgeon, "this is worse than the feoffee money"—a legacy of 100*l.* a-year distributable by the churchwardens. And so it was. The Rectory was beset with ragged women and children—one held a half-pint cup for "some jelly, please;" another had brought a quart bottle for wine, and a third had a red pitcher for soup. The "heart-rending demands" were an increasing quantity, and poor aunt's income was a stationary one; so, in spite of her exertions, the poverty seemed more and more

a-head of her pence, and the good woman was becoming quite ill from excitement.

I told the doctor of our difficulty, and he promised his assistance to open aunt's eyes, and also to provide a better field for her charity. He came with his wife to tea, and we broached the subject of the "*fi*-fee money," and "the art of doing good." "Why was John Bell behindhand with his rent?" said Mr. Elways. "Why did Kate Horn come to grief?—Simply because one year they had the fi-fee money; and these rotten reeds, the fi-fees, were ever after their sole dependence."

"Yes," said Mr. Elways, "the feoffees divide from 2*l.* to 5*l.* each among from twenty to fifty parishioners. Sometimes the same people receive year after year, sometimes only once. So, to have once had fi-fee money, damps the self-dependence of five persons where it enriches one. Yes, this is quite a valuable experiment in economics. It is sowing dragons' teeth, is this parish legacy; for, the most fiendish jealousy arises. You observed how Cawson scowled and looked daggers at old Camp when preferred to him. Indeed," added Mr. Elways, "the feoffees' own labourers are always chosen. A bargain has been made to sell the pig for so much, with 'a good word to the fi-fees.' So, the seller looks to the feoffees to pay him for his pig. In other words, directly or indirectly, one-half the money finds its way into the feoffees' own pockets, and the other half breeds poverty, malice, and all bad feelings."

This was a lesson for the lady-visitor, who now agreed to limit her visits to objects recommended by myself and the doctor. She now learnt that true charity helps people to help themselves, and that she should never induce the poor to calculate on her assistance. My rule was to inquire what persons have parish pay; for, they are sure to be living on "half diet."

Ellen was amiably devoted to old people. We had every Sunday twelve interesting specimens of longevity, who could number about 1000 years between the party. These venerable guests we regaled on soup, thickened with meat and rice; because no one had a full complement of teeth, and some had no teeth at all. Daniel Fry was Ellen's great amusement. He was called "the errand-boy," though aged eighty! and he would actually fetch and carry twenty miles on an occasion. We also had a Clothing Club—taking in the pennies periodically, and returning the same with a bonus in clothes at Christmas. By all these means I endeavoured to maintain a character for liberality without giving money when called to visit.

It occurred to me as a very strange coincidence that the same Moll Pounce—a woman who had always an excuse for not being at church, and no favourite with the people—was so often the messenger with "Please, sir, to visit poor So-and-so. She is werry bad, and has nothing to make use of: a drop o' wine or the like o' that would do her a world of good." The truth was, she always cried halves; and, however poor the patient, Moll Pounce acted nurse while the victuals lasted. Ellen named her the "Vampyre," and others called her the "Bloodsucker." I can never forget the woman. She had an evil-blighting eye and withering scowl, and would have been burned for a witch in the olden time. Many a time has that woman called on me for my prayers as a pretence, when all she wanted was my purse.

Such characters always spring up under a bad system of acting minister and almoner at the same time. Still, make what rule you will, sometimes you will feel compelled to break it.—Imagine a man with a death's chill upon him pointing to the grate and asking for sticks, and saying, "I have nothing but *cold* water, sir!" Imagine the craving subject of a draining ulcer asking for such food as could alone replace her wasting flesh! Ay, and see heroic endurance, patience, and self-denial—like the eagle feeding her young with her own blood, till the parson's heart is probed and tried at every pore for a soft and yielding corner; you will then understand the trials of a poor curate in "sick-visiting." Sometimes it has seemed to me a mockery to pray and not to relieve. The dull and drooping eye seems to look and to remonstrate, "You have food and clothing, but I am starving."

Ah, my young friends, take care you never have this on your conscience, that you have been less frequent with your prayers, having exhausted all your alms! Take care that you don't delay a visit to find a corpse!

One day I urged a sick girl to communicate. There was no seeming danger for a year at least. She said, "I will, next week." I urged her to name the morrow. "No, sir, when you return; I can't till then. Pray don't ask me, I am not alone. But please come this day week."

I did so, and heard—"Is it Mary Turner you want to see, sir? Please, sir, she wouldn't keep. She was buried Tuesday."—What would my feelings have been, had this been *my* delay! Death is an awful answer. How presumptuous to think that the Almighty should bide the time of man! "He being dead yet

speaketh." Nor is there anything like the silence of death to point reproaches to the guilty heart.

Poor Mary Tanner was an interesting person. She would give you some clue to her fears and feelings. But this is comparatively rare in sick-visiting. I have gone from one room to another for a whole morning, and read and prayed to persons with scarcely a glance of intelligence or response. I always tried to have the friends in the room, and I am quite sure that I could not be seen visiting in my parish without striking notes of warning in some hearts as I passed along. There is many a sermon even in the church-bell; and as to our towers and spires dotted in the landscape, no one can tell how many impressions we owe to "those silent fingers pointing to the skies."

Neither is visiting among the higher circles always an unqualified satisfaction. I saw no little of this kind of visiting one winter at Torquay. There I saw the ball-room dissipation, with reckless waste of health and strength—late hours—rooms hot to suffocation, and relieved by open windows pouring in the wind of a winter's night on bare necks and low dresses, thin as gossamer—all this I saw, even among the families who had brought some poor girl to die. The Rev. —— once preached a sermon on this mockery and "dance of death."

Suppose the case of a clergyman called in to such a family as this. I think I now see the pale, hectic countenance of a poor girl, half-reclining on a sofa. But how am I to begin?—because on either side the fire is sitting a fine lady, all false curls and crinoline. Here we see the vanities of this world and the realities of the world to come. Ladies rouged and feathered on a bright court-day find the sun rather intrusive, and a little too matter-of-fact. You want false light for false things; and, a fellow-creature in a consumption always throws a very steady glare on the tinsel and frippery of this world's stage. It often makes me think of the lady overtaken at her toilet—"the corpse dressed for a ball!"

The only way to overcome my difficulty was to say I found it advisable to see the sufferer alone, and that after a time I would summon as many as pleased to the usual prayers.

But I am still at Greenside. Ellen was a diligent attendant at the school, cutting out and basting needle-work, and acting Goody Thomas with the Testament. Our aunt was unwearied. Her faith and fervour made me as much ashamed of my lukewarm piety as Lady Oxton's Scripture knowledge did of my theology.

But the boys' school on Mr. Hixon's "agricultural afternoons" was her perplexity, and mine too. There you saw a troop of little urchins helter-skelter, with rakes and spades, and some ten pulling at a low cart to hold turnips and potatoes — the poor master bawling in vain for order.

One day I remarked in the field to the said schoolmaster:—

"There is not much work done yet, I think, for so many of you — eh, Mr. Softy?"

"Many, sir? What good's them brats? — I does the work. I does it all myself — they's only in the way — a-tripping of me up."

"Did you finish that gate you were set to paint?" I added.

"That ere blessed gate, sir? — Them climbed on it afore it was dry, and Tom Bolter I put the stick on for daubing Harry's pinny. I told Mr. Hixon as this scheme would never work. 'Haggricultural's all my eye,' says Bolter's mother. ''Tis digging and hoeing, and nothing else, so no lies about the matter. It is a downright shame to serve us so. Why don't ye keep 'em to their books, and larn 'em something? Bill shall dig my taties afore ever he digs the parson's — I'm sharp enough for that.'"

Mrs. Bolter was not long in seeking reparation at the Rectory. Ellen promised her a new pinny; so, as there was no more painting to do, there seemed an end of that. But next week, returning late to dinner, I found aunt and Ellen and Susan all in a state of great excitement.

"There's been more 'haggricultural' work," said Susan — "such a noise, and missus 'most in hysterics — much as I could do to comfort her." The tale soon came out. The mangel-wurzel wanted hoeing; the boys were buried among the leaves and stalks like hounds in a furze-brake, and came out caked with mud and dripping wet. Instead of drying them, three of the mothers walked them straight down to the Rectory and made the noise aforesaid. Poor Softy came next, and said he would rather give his place up than stand such strife of tongues. Besides, he could not walk down the village but every farmer's boy gibed at his school for farming.

This ended Mr. Hixon's "haggricultural arternoons."

One effect of our school and college education is to lead us to undervalue plain mother-wit, that has never been sharpened on the grindstone academical. Our sexton, Simon Baines, taught me my mistake; he also taught me how men did not always die

when the Union doctor said they ought; but that the candle of life—which still flared and flickered in spite of the draughts of cottage-life from the cradle to the fiftieth year—took rather a strong gust to blow it out afterwards. I used, when first I was ordained, to read the prayer as for one "whose dissolution draweth nigh," very frequently; and this prayer I once read for Simon, though years before it was required.

Well, one day young Willie Baines came wiping his eyes with his smock-frock, and said, "Father was going to die—his head was swelled as big as a bushel basket—doctor gave him up—and father had done nothing but talk a pack o' nonsense all that morning."

I was soon at father's door. A small thatched cowshed, divided into two by a rough plank division, was the house: a ticking stuffed with leaves was the bed—and on that lay the Greenside sexton.

It soon appeared that Simon had an attack of erysipelas, which had produced an inflammation of the brain; and the "pack o' nonsense" was the talk of a sick man lightheaded. The only chance, it seemed, was to keep him perfectly free from excitement; so I put all the family out of the room, and the wife agreed that no one should go in to disturb him.

Early next morning I went off to see Simon, musing on the idea of

> The desolator desolate, the victor overthrown,
> The *digger of so many graves now coming to* his own.

I quietly opened the door, and asked in an undertone, "How is Simon this morning?" "Please, sir, come in and see him," said Hannah, in a shrill and wiry key. "How are you, Simon?" I said softly. Simon made some reply, but in so low a tone that I remarked, "He is very much weaker—is he not? His voice is quite faint." "Nor, sir, nor," said Hannah; "'taint that, but there was so much company all the arternoon, cos Simon seemed a-dying: they talked him hoarse, they did."

About a fortnight after, one cold November day, Susan announced that I was wanted in the churchyard, to settle some dispute about a grave.

My first thought was, Then Simon is dead at last! But no, Simon was there alive, and clamouring, with a white cloth about his head and face that made him look more corpse-like than ever. "I am not fit to be here, sir—not a bit; I'm more fit to be in

that there grave," he said, pointing below: "only they did keep such a noise I was forced to come and settle it."

This he said standing by an open grave, and using no little eloquence to persuade Farmer Woollen that the grave opened for Betsy Small was the Small's, and nothing near the Woollen's grave. This Woollen denied, and stoutly maintained that his father's bones were those thus ruthlessly disturbed. He even handled a thigh-bone with much filial indignation: and though the said bone might have belonged to any other body, still, as they say "seeing is believing," it carried weight with the crowd.

How was I to settle the dispute? To tell the truth, I knit my brows with concentrated essence of thought as I approached the grave, ambitious, by remarking sex of skeleton, or apparent age, or time of burial, to show the superior wisdom of the Church. But all in vain. Nothing could I make out of it, still less stop the quarrel.

Words waxed warmer. The farmer laid down the law with his supposed paternal thigh-bone, and Simon found that numbers were taking part against him: for, anything so demonstrative as this bone seemed, he sought in vain on his side. At last Simon was well-nigh condemned to fill up the Woollen grave, to replace the scattered bones, and hide his diminished head as a false pretender to all mortuary lore, when all of a sudden a bright thought flashed from beneath Simon's beetling brows.

"I 'll soon tell ye," he cried out: "I 'll show ye—every mother's son of ye—a set of gaping, stupid, nasty, make-believe chaps, to think to talk to sich as me!" he said, groping among the mould at every epithet.—"But, I say, I 'll let ye see. There!" holding up a bit of the coffin, "what d'ye call that? Oak—oak—Farmer Woollen! this be oak!" Still, I could not see the logic of the matter. "Yes, oak! Now your father was buried by the parish," he said, with a sarcastic thump in the ribs, "and we all knows they don't give oak. This ain't no grave o' yourn."

This turned the tide of popular opinion in a moment. Farmer Woollen was crest-fallen and Simon was triumphant, and so happy in the victory that I had some trouble to make him go home and take care of himself.

Few stories of Old Bailey evidence beat this. I couldn't help feeling that a man is not necessarily sharper for being born a gentleman.

I hastened home in high glee, to amuse Ellen and my aunt with so diverting a tale, when, to my great surprise, Ellen opened

the door to me in tears, and Susan I saw slinking away down the passage. What could be the matter? What sad news was I to hear?

I led Ellen speechless into the study. She locked the door: for aunt, not understanding the ways of young married people, used to run in and out, all over the house.

The distressing truth now came out—Ellen was at issue with my aunt. Susan had been gradually encroaching, like another Jinny Hayward, and Ellen had stood upon her rights as a married woman, and told aunt that Susan should leave the house. Servants have a contempt for poverty, and Susan had let poor Ellen know that she had told all the parish that missus paid the way, and "you was nobodies." Reflection told Ellen that we had little but aunt's purse to depend upon; also, that I was bound to her both by affection and gratitude, and that my mother had warned us both before we married, that we were taking, not only each other, but aunt and Susan also, "for better and for worse."

Aunt I found "in hysterics," talking of ingratitude—of all her hopes of happiness being blighted—and declaring that Susan was necessary to her very existence.

I had seen the storm brewing for some time. Aunt's money distanced Ellen in the parish: aunt's mind, energy, and experience ruled within-doors: for, as surely as lead will sink and cork will swim, so surely will the stronger nature always rule. Perhaps I had made bad worse by quoting and preferring aunt's opinion on all occasions. This alone tried Ellen's spirit very hard. But when the maid took the cue from her mistress and thrust Ellen into the background, too—at first with pouts and leers and tosses of the head, and at length with downright impudence—the thing became quite unbearable.

I felt deeply pained and utterly perplexed. What to decide I knew not, but, as sometimes happens, fortune cut the knot; for, hearing this saucy maid—an old servant is often the most insulting tyrant imaginable—pass the room, impulse and indignation supplied the place of reasoning, and, without waiting to consult my aunt, I called the offender in and shut the door. I briefly asked her what boxes she had and what wages were due, for in one hour's time she should leave the house. In this, my indignant feelings were so far supported by those of Ellen, that Miss Susan saw she might as well resist or reason with a whirlwind; so she soon realised her mistake, and eventually made such humble apologies as gave my wife the upper hand. I then was in a better *position to* approach my aunt.

Painful and distracted were the feelings of that morning. At length aunt said she would try to think no more of what had passed — she had heard "that a divided rule rarely promised peace, and that young married people were best alone; for, many a blunder in the game of life would pass unheeded but for lookers-on."— And so, by help of a good average quantity of kisses and sal volatile, we were all composed, and spent a quiet, though an awfully silent and punctilious evening.

The charm was now broken. The good woman had received a blow. From that hour she felt that she was one too many. I did all I could; but when I began to give my confidence to a wife I found it impossible to be the same to my aunt. The kind lady now found out her mistake. In joining the young couple together, she had given us each our toy, and we wanted to play in our own way.

It is very painful to look back to those times, but the good woman's presence became daily more irksome. She was all prudence, all rule and method; our home was of the Reformatory or House-of-Correction kind. We felt her curb at every spirit, her safety-drag for ever clogged our wheels. She was an excellent woman, I admit: but who could bear a constant Mrs. Trimmer? In the game of life, like other games, half the fun consists in finding out the puzzle by yourself. We began to sympathise with the child who complained that "good ways happened to be so nasty, and naughty ways were so nice." Our life was so insipid. We were gulping down whole days without enjoying them, and thought of the alderman who exclaimed over his turtle, "You most unconscionable fellow, your remark made me swallow a large piece of green fat without tasting it!"

Aunt and I did very well together while I was single, but how could I blow hot and cold at the same time? What young bride would be flattered by no more ardour than would suit the temperature of sixty-two? In one sense there is nothing so selfish as love. Dr. Chalmers wrote a celebrated sermon on "the expulsive influence of a new affection:" my affection for Ellen gradually drove poor aunt out of the house. Fanny's quiz had come true: "aunt expected in all delicate attentions to share and share alike." In short, aunt was jealous of Ellen's influence, and Ellen was jealous of hers.—Really, I did all I could to make things pleasant; but a woman soon perceives when a man is ill at ease.

Like other persons with minds ever recurring to the same painful subject, I was glad to provide varied news at every meal:

and now, the strange vagaries of a noted Tractarian were the theme of every country paper and of every morning call.

The Rev. J. Walters, of Wanley, was setting up crucifixes, confessing ladies, Romanising his chapel, and at last had suffered a large secession to Rome. While he kept obstinately urging that his doctrine was a perfect antidote to Popery, it awkwardly happened to give a dozen people that very complaint.

My aunt, just then, was horrified at the name of Popery. Her favourite preacher found, like others, that it was hard to be eloquent without some one to oppose, and hard to be amusing without some horror or novelty on which to harp. The Tractarians were a fortune to him; and every fifth of November he used to rake up old enormities against the Roman Catholics, and he would talk of resisting them at the hazard of the fire and the stake, well knowing that the trials of modern martyrs are limited to "a silver tea-pot and the rest in money." It is very strange that any clergyman should be found reckless of exaggeration when on behalf of the truth! But so it was, and her imagination was haunted with a vision of Romanism flapping its black wings over all the land.

Some such warnings were much wanted, but at this time certain preachers could talk of nothing else.

I happened to have an engagement near Wanley, about ten miles from Greenside, and promised to reconnoitre and inquire into the truth of these reports. Next day I was within a mile of this city of the Pope, when I met a man with Romanism in his coat, Popery in his collar, and a cigar in his mouth, and that peculiar seat on his horse which was never learnt by quiet rides on the king's highway. As I was staring hard at this anomaly, he coolly took his cigar from his mouth, made a sporting salute of other days, and said:—

"Hulloa, old fellow! who'd have thought of seeing you?"

"What, Johnny Walters! I did hear of a Walters in these parts, but never thought of Walters of Queen's."

"You never thought I should take up with this party, I dare say.—But why not? I was always a gentleman, I make bold to say, and a man of taste, so what other party could I join? But come, turn back along with me. I'll show you my chapel—improvements—quite correct—*instrumenta ecclesiastica* perfect, and all that. Capital organ, too; and my fellows all wear surplices—correct again; and I flatter myself that they do chants and introits first rate. You remember, I always was fond of *music.*"

"And pray how is Mrs. Walters? I had the pleasure of seeing her at Oxford some time since."

"Yes, I know. She is pretty well, thank you. She often talks of you. They know nothing of *that affair* down here. It would spoil all. '*Plucked*,' indeed! that is nothing at all at College; but out of Oxford, people would fancy *goose's* feathers throughout life."

"Scripture and Divinity," I said, "was your difficulty, if I remember rightly?" (Wasn't that mischievous of me?)

"Yes, yes. Divinity for the Examiners—so accurate—texts for everything—all Scripture, and so nice about doctrines. But it is quite different in the Church. The Oxford Tracts are the things to give a man a notion or two. Apostolical succession and "notes of the True Church" are the thing. It puzzles the Dissenters to come up to that—does it not?"

After some casual remarks he continued:—"You'll see my wife presently. Don't say much about it. She's shockingly Low Church, and keeps on being so vexatious. She has never got over that pluck, all because in Divinity—quite absurd! She says, that more of the Bible and less Church History"—(N.B. I doubt if it could have been much less)—"would have set me all the other way. You heard of those people going to Rome? That was a great bore, that was. Temple, my curate, did all that mischief—I was away at Brighton. He confessed some women in the vestry. A Jesuit in disguise—that's what he was. The women would do anything for him—so they will for me. All the women used to be like my wife, that is, Low Church—having nothing else to sympathise with. High Church suits them much better—fine discovery for women—they hem surplices, work monograms, get up chants, and wreathe holly and flowers, Christmas and Easter. I wish you could only see them all hard at work, with wine and cake and good luncheon, and men of our party to help them—by dozens."

"Well, Walters, that's very much what I expected. I hear that this new persuasion, or rather, the Wanley version of it, does not so much as interfere with their balls and parties, and the amusements of gay people."

"Balls and parties! certainly not. I go myself. We have a very hospitable set of people here. I seldom dine at home in the Wanley season—very high society comes to Wanley then. I know them all. Lord Yawn, Marquis of Stretcham, and Sir Wormwood Scrubbs, give capital parties. Lady Emily Scrubbs always comes to Litany Prayers—eight o'clock in the morning.

That meddling fellow, Temple, set that service going. It is a very great bore, for I am obliged to go on with it—as bad as getting up for College Chapel. Lady Yawn and her two nieces, though at a late party the night before, are often up in time; and they are my great supporters."

By this time we had entered his house, and had seen Mrs. Walters. She was, indeed, much altered. She "had married to reform him;" which means, "she had married a man who wanted reforming;" and paid the penalty of every religious woman "unequally yoked to unbelievers."

This silly man's conceit, ignorance, and worldliness, naturally preferred the garb of that party which has more externals to blind the vulgar eye when it is found less easy to imitate their piety and self-denial. For an Evangelical clergyman he could never have passed. Cast of features and a seasoned discourse would have tasked him too hard, to say nothing of a sermon of some fervour and unction on a Sunday. All parties are committed by pretenders, but the notes of the Evangelical are harder to sound, when all is hollowness within. Of the Tractarian party he was so bad an imitation—the wonder of my life has been that he passed at all. Their devotion, their self-denial, and the strict pastoral character—essentials which claim from every Christian man the greatest possible indulgence as regards minor foibles, that may mellow down by time—this was ludicrously though painfully wanting. Still, he counted as extreme High Church, when the poor creature was in reality no Church at all: and, worse than that, by his man-millinery and church-upholstery, and his hollow, soulless practices, he

"Played such fantastic tricks before high heaven,"

as brought, far and wide, contempt and ridicule upon the Church.

He showed me his chapel, consisting of four plastered walls, slate roof, and place for a bell. The interior, without the gallery, would have looked like a Mechanics' Institute. But what was simply plain and ugly, he had made absurd and ridiculous by investing the east end with a grotesque parody of a Popish chapel.

I had some private conversation with his wife. She soon discovered my ideas of the ministry, and did indeed unburthen her mind. It was much against her conscience that she had countenanced him in taking Holy Orders at all. His tastes were wholly unfitted, and what he wanted in spirit he made up by absurd forms. All this, I must clearly see, was hollow and

childish. There was a language in the decorations of the Temple Church—"the teaching of the eye" had there a meaning. It was addressed to minds who could discern things symbolised. It was served by ministers who could breathe a spirit into forms. But this tawdry lath and plaster, and this irreverent nasal twang—a libel on devotional intoning—to her was truly painful. If her husband's distaste for his duties had shown itself in field sports, or in any of the more common forms of idleness, she could have been much better reconciled to her misfortune.

It can hardly be believed, but so it was, that in a town of many hundreds of respectable families this folly was tolerated in a man, whose real character was so easy to read, that the common remark was, "Walters is a very good fellow, only he should have been in the army: he never was for the Church."

Manifestly to condemn High Church for the insanities of one, whom any Christian minister would be deeply grieved to acknowledge, is most unjust: as well reproach the followers of Mr. Simeon with the hypocrisies of those who are bent on fashionable congregations and rich wives.

My opinion is, that moderately High Church and Low Church, two parties with forms and discipline more or less precise—prone as the human mind is to error—providentially conduce to preserve sound doctrine. If we allow for the oscillation of the pendulum, we may soon discern that the balance of truth is ultimately preserved between them. Each party forms a check on the other.

Without High Church, Ultra-Protestantism would ensue, to the sacrifice of all forms and ceremonies, all law and precedent, and even of the sacraments and all objective truth.

Again, without Low Church to raise the No-Popery cry, Roman Catholicism would ensue, from the absence of all subjective truth. High Church alone would set up the sign above the thing signified, and make "the soul cleave unto the dust," instead of being "quickened according to God's word." Low Church alone would land us in Puritanism; it would destroy the candle in its zeal for the light; it would forget the earthen vessel can alone preserve the heavenly treasure in this life; it would etherealise religion till it became "the unsubstantial fabric of a dream," and vanished clean out of mind.

As long as there are two classes of minds; the one leaning on law and precedent, and fond of antiquity, systems, and symbols; the other preferring to be "a law unto themselves," and feeling (or at least not knowing why they should not feel) as

much assisted in their devotions by rectangular lath and plaster, as by the time-hallowed associations of a Gothic minster—so long this diversity of mind will be represented by two such parties as the High Church and the Low.

When I returned home, I made the most of my story and my day's adventures, and related also the antecedents of Johnny Walters, who was plucked at College, and how he said at College that his wife's pupil, "Polly Dodds, in scriptural knowledge could beat his head off." Amidst all the interest created, I could see that a cloud hung over Ellen, and my aunt too—Susan and Ellen's maid had now fallen out, and Susan was suspected of listening at our door, and repeating all we said, of course "with variations," to her mistress.

This made me very uneasy and unsettled. Remember, I had married to get *settled*, and to insure a mind wholly devoted to my duties; but this proved a sad delusion, for I had been unsettled ever since. Ellen always depended much upon my company—she would have gone melancholy-mad if I had not frequently returned to walk with her; and now that she was on unpleasant terms with my aunt, I was more tied to her than ever. Once more Fanny's warning proved true: a man may be instituted to the "charge" or the "cure," not only of a parish but of a lady: and a conflict of duties, as when affection pulls one way and your profession another, is a very trying part of the probation of this mortal state.

We now began to talk about independence. Ellen declared she never could be happy as she was. It were a wonder if she could. Aunt rose before her distempered mind as the cause of every inward twinge and every aching void that flesh is heir to; and of these painful conditions of our mortal state Ellen had about her average share. Our hopes and fears, affections and passions, the fancies of the head and the yearnings of the heart, form a very delicate and a very complex piece of machinery. And since Ellen's moral system went faster or slower, with more or less of friction or inward irritation, as the barometer of her spirits rose or fell, it followed that with her, as with other ladies, there was for every day its disagreeables, and aunt was made accountable for all.

We all have our bugbears, animate or inanimate, in this life. Ellen's bugbear had been her step-mother, and now it was my aunt. Marriage she had looked forward to as heaven upon earth, and as a cure for everything. She did not know that all marriages add poignancy to troubles, but good marriages only

increase our pleasures. There never was an affectionate survivor who did not every month feel, "how much more distressing would this disappointment be if my loved one were alive to hear me tell it." Still, ours was a good marriage—I was her chief happiness, and she was mine. Marriage had given our hearts a few more strings and a more natural tone, and, so far, better harmony; but, there ever will be something discordant in the human heart—that discord or discontent within the breast which is inseparable from our fallen, shattered, and degenerate nature—and this no human affection can ever be so charming as to subdue.

However, this being my dear wife's state of mind, I was prepared to find her every day devising some change that should secure her an undivided empire over that troubled kingdom, my poor heart, and invest her with the full rights and dignity of a married woman. Much as I regret it, I cannot blame her. All wives feel the same, that while any female relative is in the way the dominion never can be theirs. Gentlemen often feel this too. Matt. Currant told his wife, in my presence, that her mother spoilt all his sovereignty for the first six months, and after that, it took two years to rub the old lady out of the young one!

While such were our hopes and wishes, something occurred, as it were, to let the house over the discontented tenant's head—something which imperatively told us that circumstances had decided for us, and that, as far as leaving Greenside would further our views, that change was now beyond all question. For, as I was returning one day from Hinton, our market-town, I heard our bell tolling, and saw heads out of cottage windows, and every symptom of some stirring news: when Sally Browning stopped my horse and said, "What! han't you a heard, sir? 'Tis our Rector 's dead! News come by Thomas Gidden's coach." Yes, the sad tidings had arrived that my good old Rector had died suddenly of hæmorrhage in the lungs: so it came to pass, that while we were discussing the wisdom of a change, circumstances decided for us. I confess the news so took us by surprise, that we secretly reflected it was a pity we did not know when we were well off.

What now was our position? All we could muster was 40*l.* a-year, and we had no ready money to move with; so that, far from my aunt being guilty of cramping our independence, we now saw that, but for her assistance, we could not move hand or foot!

We never had such a lesson in our lives. The good lady's fidgeting now shrank into nothing, and Susan's impudence was

a trifle, before the difficulties which now opened to our view. Our dream of independence, with a single rub of the eyes, and thinking "Where am I?" seemed a shadow indeed. Ellen's "dignity as a married woman," began also to feel that this world's "rubs" are comparative, and there are hard rubs everywhere.

Poor dear creature! born as we are into a school of misery, we all find the grammar the hardest part. Independence, indeed! Well, if we could play a solo, or dance through life as one *pas seul*, we might be independent; but, while every yearning implies an object, and every friend, relative or servant, is but mortal like ourselves — while independence of scrubbing implies dependence on the gin of a Hayward, or the impudence of a Susan, we may vary our chains, but not escape them, and often find the new more galling than the old.

But what was to be done? — Ellen and I were a long time closeted and deep in thought before we went, or had the courage to go, like naughty, "found-out" children, into the presence of my aunt. Her feelings we measured by our own guilty deserts, and were fully prepared for a look at least that should tell us, — "Well, you are likely to have your wish this time, and how do you like the prospect? The present home has slipped from under you — your feelings are wrapped up in each other. One whom I have tended through life as my own child, has grown cold and restrained in my presence. Little did I think, as my boy gave his heart to another, it must chill his affections, that once were so confiding, so grateful, to me."

This was the reception we anticipated as we both went together into the room. What to say, and how to begin, we did not know; but the trying moment must come, and Ellen shook like a leaf as she tried to compose herself for the scene. But — as too often happens — we had left the life-long habits and distinctive character of the supposed adversary wholly out of the calculation, and had reasoned just as if we had expected the wolf's nature in a lamb.

No sooner had we opened the door than, with tears of tenderness, she sprang forward to meet us.

"My dear children," she said, with eyes liquid with pity, "you are not used to life's trials as I am. This world has troubles, and these are of them. Oh! don't mistake me: I weep not for this trial only, but a long course is before you. I have felt them all: and I have long seen how little you knew of the *real troubles* of life, you thought so much of imaginary ills.

Thorns and thistles strew your path. My heart melts within me when I think of the first of a long series which broke upon me. And may the Almighty help you: the book of Scripture and the book of life say both the same thing — trouble, trouble, nothing but trouble. The sun bursts out brightly between whiles, but cloud follows cloud: we can only hope for a lull — no long-continued calm. But — I know it is in vain to tell you. I look into your future when I am dead and gone, and when there are none to stand by you. You know, my dear girl, and must make allowance — you know how my yearnings have always been towards him I called my own dear boy. I am a fond, foolish old woman, I know. But I see the truth, I have felt it before. My brother and I were like two doves till that brother married, and then he was lost to me. I must be content with the life of the poor old maid, and promote that happiness of affection which, in age as in youth, is denied to myself."

Butler says, "Had virtue power as it has authority, it would rule the world." This noble woman's goodness shook the very ground from under us, and made us powerless beneath her sway. We were both too deeply moved and overwhelmed to utter much in words, however expressive were our looks. It was eventually agreed that we had some months to consider, and therefore we would deem all for the best and not mention the subject for the present. — "You will know, when as old as I am, my dears, how often while 'man proposes God disposes,' and our anxious deliberations end in a decision not our own." How often have we quoted these words!

The next post brought a letter from a solicitor. He had altered Mr. Griffin's will on his death-bed, and had to announce, not a legacy, but a cheque of fifty guineas he held for me, to be given me on the day of the funeral, at which I was expected to officiate. The good old man meant this cheque as a compensation for the expense consequent on the brief tenure of my curacy.

I was obliged to start after the services on a Sunday. It was a cold November evening, and my way lay over some of the bleakest hills in the county. After a long Sunday's duties, Ellen and my aunt knew I was fit for nothing but to lie on the sofa, or, perhaps, quietly sketch my next Sunday's sermon; too tired to read. Such a midnight journey seemed too severe to purchase even by the fifty guineas. So, I was coddled and wrapped up with warm neckerchiefs to the last moment, and then committed to the care of Mr. Dean's servant to drive.

However, I travelled safely twenty miles in the farmer's gig to the railway station, and reached the house of mourning in the Regent's Park at three o'clock in the morning, where a bed was prepared for me.

Every man, and certainly every woman, is an alchemist. In one sense, we can turn everything to gold, or "therefrom suck no small advantage," at least in the way of excitement, vanity, and self-importance, if not in money: for, I have always observed that, from the moment the master of the house is dead, ay, or even dying, the house turns into Liberty Hall, and every one seems to think that, somehow or other, it must be made to turn to his or her private benefit. From the coal-cellar to the garrets, waste and extravagance run riot. The only work worth anything done in the house, out of the sick-room, is answering the door.

I was admitted by a kind of Mrs. Proserpine, with a nightcap tied on by a ribbon. "Very cold, sir, you must be. I expected you ever so long—you won't mind our kitchen—obliged to keep a good fire—very acceptable such a night as this—cos of the soldering. I knows pretty well what belongs to these jobs—seen so many of them. Master is to be buried in lead—and regular undertakers' jobbery that is. Please sit down, sir—(handling a gridiron)—I ordered in a steak for your supper."

Indeed, true to the occasion, she had calculated my appetite at about 4lbs. of choice beef; though a fine cold sirloin was in view. While preparing me some tea, she went on: "Yes, them undertakers do make jobs—buried in lead, indeed!—so stiff and cold-like; I cannot bear the notion. And that churchyard is such a damp, unhealthy sort of place—they shouldn't bury me there—let alone the body-snatchers."

"So, you have found the undertakers quite alive to their own interest?"

"Bless me, sir! you should hear my 'sperience to know 'em. You see a body can die but once, sir, and it takes twice to be up to them. No feeling in them, not a bit of it—for all they moves about so sympathetic. You've heard o' ravens about a house afore death—well, they's like the undertakers—a asking for the funeral afore ever the gentleman's dead. Why, there was Miss Maria, sister to Mr. West—I was months with him—had a young woman call about the mourning when she hadn't quite given up hoping he might live. And the letters that were sent—cemetery letters, drawings of tombstones, patent crape, besides undertakers writing for orders, and making interest through the

tradespeople—and the poor gentleman alive all the time—'twas shameful! But the doctors mostly likes to put in the first word; for undertakers' wives has babies and fevers, and all them complaints, like other folk: so it's wheels within wheels. But I served Williams, that made such a fortune burying all Gotham.—He used to have champagne dinners for the Gotham doctors—he did."

It may astonish some to hear me say every word of this was strictly true. One of my relations, while driving a hard bargain with her landlord, at eighty-three, was answered, "Well, ma'am, but if I do make the repairs, you must leave orders that I am to bury you!" I have also seen vaults made on speculation, and a lady of the same age led round that way,—"perhaps she might fancy one of them."

By this time I was ready for bed, and left my interesting companion to keep up the fire for closing the leaden coffin.

Next morning, before breakfast, the first person I met at this house of mourning was Mrs. White, his housekeeper, and almost his nurse—an old servant to whom he had left an annuity.

"Oh, Mr. Austin!" she exclaimed, "such a life they lead me all along of this annuity. There they were a eagling of my dear old master almost as soon as he was dead. Why, charity ain't a sin, and for all that they say nothing but is bad of him. The cousin and the nephew pounced upon the will, and read a whole list of hospitals and societies, and a few hundreds only for themselves. Master often said they had more than they made good use of as it was.—But hush! here they are, coming down-stairs."

Enter nephew and his wife, persons of about fifty years of age. "It will not be a very large funeral, Mr. Austin. How can it, after such a will as his? Undertaker's men say there is not a bite or a drop for any one. We think the charities ought to bury him. A sad thing, indeed, is want of family affection! Lunatics, incurables, consumptives, cancerous, and all sorts,—all preferred to his own pure flesh and blood!"

Truth is stranger than fiction. "Sad thing is want of family affection," indeed! Why, these very people who said so would "have coined his heart and dropped his blood for drachmas," could they have done so, and were ready to scratch "Skin-flint" on the escutcheon of one who had lived a life of doing good.

One of the most instructive scenes in life is a rich man's funeral. Clergymen necessarily see and hear a great deal on these occasions. For my own part, I never found much temptation to introduce Confession into the Church; least of all when the

heart is full, and working with the yeast of envy, covetousness, and all unkindness. At these times I have heard far more confessions than, for the honour of human nature, I ever thought to hear.

My kind friend was seventy-six when he died. He knew the "world," to wit, "the flesh and the devil," as well as most men. To know the world you should know yourself. Even the Christian Mr. Griffin had only to look within. He had only to imagine his own heart free from the constraining grace of God—a ship without a rudder, anchor, or ballast, at the mercy of every gale, and bursting, like the cave of Æolus, with passions hardly chained within; and he would find, even in his own breast, a type and model of the world without.

See the "happy" family in Trafalgar Square. Those cats, and owls, and hawks, represent genteel life. They have each their proper nature, and can only keep their claws to themselves, because living in easy circumstances. Mrs. Dowager Cat has not an ugly kitten on her hands at the end of a season; they have no nests to feather, and they are all well fed. And no one knew better than Mr. Griffin that this often makes the difference between the quarrelsome couples before the justice, and the well-regulated family at the Hall.

"I'll be my own executor, as far as possible," said the good old man. "After my death worms may destroy my mortal body, but the lawyers shall not feed long on my estate. There will be a fine noise in the house when my will is opened, but I shall not hear it. My will must be one to satisfy the chancery of Heaven. No one will know, so no one can be jealous of gifts that I arrange in my life-time. You know my favourite charities. They are all remembered. We can't take our money with us. I think it far better to divide as much as I can across my table, and leave very little to be shared over my coffin."

These, I knew, were his sentiments: yet, so deeply was I impressed by his benevolence—for he had been the founder of an hospital—a man of no mere fireside charity, who had served every good cause, not only in purse, but person, and "went about doing good"—that I expected nothing but praises and blessings would follow him to the tomb.

"Did you ever," said the Rev. John Brown of Aberdeen, in one of his quaint but pointed sermons—"did you ever attend a rich man's funeral? You would think the man had neither a body nor a soul—that he was made of gold, of bankers' balances, and parchment."

I have attended many. The conversation is much the same; you hear little of what the man lived worth, but very much of what he died worth. We are forcibly reminded of what Robert South preached—"Early in life I heard it said that an old man had no friend but his money. I have myself lived long enough to feel its truth."

The sublime and the ridiculous, the tricky means of life, and the awful end of it, are nowhere brought into stronger contrast than with the class who live by what are called, in the callous vulgar tongue, "black jobs." After a little experience, I felt more disgust than awe from the funeral preparation and etiquette, wherein the undertaker acts as a kind of Master of the Ceremonies, ticketing our hats, and prescribing the order of precedence; and really, when he does say who is chief mourner, I often feel I never should have guessed it from the gentleman's looks. But to persons unused to these mock solemnities, they are a cruel addition to the necessary terrors of the day. I have seen a fine fellow bear up manfully all that trying morning, in which he was to see the last of one, "the desire of his eyes," and the cherished object of his heart; but, when the draper came in to pin the trumpery scarf upon his shoulder, I have seen him tremble and give way, just as I should expect while pinioning the condemned.

It may seem strange if I confess that I read the service over my worthy Rector without much emotion. The pall, the coffin, the preparation at the grave, and, above all, the lowering out of sight, when we turn our faces, and leave the last trace of any loved one behind—these are the trying moments to most persons, and once were to me.—You hear one is dead; and, while he is still in the same silent chamber, you scarcely can realise your loss: but, when the turf has closed over him, or when the last wheel has moved from the door, and left you gazing on vacancy through the half-closed shutter, then it is that you first feel your heart-wrenching sorrow. All this funeral routine, and the mere accidents of death, are now so familiar to me, that they fail to intensify the pang of the first sad tidings.

Our funeral party consisted of some old acquaintances resolved to follow him to the grave, and some life-long dependants who sincerely wept for their best of friends.

Providentially, at loss of relatives, we seldom have much leisure to brood over our own wounded spirit. All great changes are attended with doubts, and suspense, and anxieties peculiarly their own. We cannot dwell on things very different at the same time.

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We cannot be swayed at once with feelings of the softer and the sterner kind. Death appeals to the imagination and the poetry of our nature, but the cares of life to cold calculation and to facts.—We must eat and drink as well as grieve: and the daily ebb and flow of hunger and of sleep all help to divert the mind, as also to pour in a flood of buoyant spirits to cheer the sinking heart. All this I have experienced so often, that I can always speak comfort to the friends of those who, it is feared, will grieve overmuch. Dr. Johnson was true to life when he described the Princess in *Rasselas*, striving, but in vain, to preserve the freshness of her sorrow. Still, though time will wear out the deepest scars, the physical change that comes over us is among the mysteries of our nature. Long after the mind is composed and reconciled, the body feels the blow. The frame is all unnerved, and the strong man's knees give under him for many days.

We returned to the usual luncheon; and then each family man crammed his silk or crape into his pocket and went off home.

This day was observed at Greenside by the tolling of the bell, which carried home to many a sorrowing cottager the thought that one solemn chapter in the Book of Life was closed for ever, and that the pastor and the friend of many a year was numbered with the dead.

Dead! ay, but not gone.—"Though dead, he speaketh." It is not only in our Saviour, but in every Christian man, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," and that "we beheld Him, full of grace and truth." The true Christian bodies forth God's law—the living illustration of His word. He is the "epistle read of all men." They who could not spell their Bible, could all read the Gospel in that Minister of Christ. That perfect character which the wisdom of Greece and Rome could not realise—that balance and combination of excellencies so hard for any pen to set forth—was all made plain to the simple folk of Greenside.

I had just time to buy some little presents and catch the train to take me home, agreeably surprising the ladies about nine o'clock in the evening. They had not been quite alone. The news of the Rector's death brought many visitors to make inquiries about the probable destiny of the parish.

—"Really it is very hard upon you, Mrs. Austin: we quite pity you—it must, indeed, be so inconvenient. You'll have to leave, of course?—Your aunt, too, at her time of life: dear me, how troublesome!—How sorry you must be, after her beginning quite a new life with the young and happy couple!"—

Such was the kind of civilities which Ellen was doomed to hear.—All this secret rejoicing in a neighbour's troubles we must set down, I suppose, to a pleasing sense of comparative security.

These busybodies, the gnats and wasps of society, seemed once more ordained to thrust us onwards and deny us rest. Such persons are as police in plain clothes, spies or censors in ordinary, and no doubt they are quite a providential arrangement. "Live by labour" is the law. That a young couple should marry, increase, and multiply on the resources of one kind old woman, would, if every one did the same, soon waste the world's capital and bring civilisation to an end. And nothing prevents this evil half as much as the general tendency to despise persons who are too poor for their station or who live depending on means not their own.

The same want of sympathy was easy to read in every letter we received from the family circle. For, here I must explain that this good aunt was regarded as a kind of golden goose in our family, and they had no idea of letting us have all the eggs for ourselves. So now we soon observed—especially in Uncle Ben's family, for cousin Bens were much pinched and missed aunt sadly—some little chuckling at the thought that our monopoly was drawing to an end.

Every week something more conspired to part us. And next, Susan found out she could not bear Greenside. She missed, I suppose, all the gossip of Blindham with the baker's man at the rails, and the policeman sneaking down the area. Besides, she felt kept in order, and we seemed to "molest her ancient solitary reign." Susan, therefore, began to persuade her mistress that the place did not agree with her. How should it? We lived close to a churchyard, and she was sure she smelt the nasty bodies; and as to the damp—why the house, she had heard, was built upon a watercress bed!

All this time the mistress's own inclinations pointed the same way. She had left everything that she liked at Blindham, she had encountered everything she did not like at Greenside: the scolding wives and drunken husbands were not the better for her reading or her tracts, and the ragged children were not the more tidy for her pennies or her pinnies. She had been used to see no object more repulsive, in the way of charity, than a pleasant-looking gentleman to receive one pound one, with a little talk into the bargain, in her own drawing-room; whereas, in the lanes of Greenside she was like a mudlark, and the colds that she caught in the cottages, and certain other things which Susan had to catch when she came home—were dreadful.

And it is quite natural that she should also miss her little Blindham dissipations — consisting of putting on her best clothes, and seeing in the glass how she was going to look; then wheel-chair, tea and talk, expounding, prayers; then cake and wine, then wheel-chair again, and seeing once more in the glass how she had looked, and so happy and hallucinated for a week. Besides — must I confess it? — all her love for her nephew could not reconcile her to the loss of her dear Blindham minister. There was, she allowed, a great satisfaction in assisting at my Sunday-school, and I believe she was yet more delighted while waiting on my Sunday pensioners and fishing for dumplings and bits of meat in the large red pan of soup. But as to my sermons, she said they were all very well for poor souls destitute of all Christian experience, but — but — for herself ——

I knew what she meant. She found them flat and insipid: she had been used to Sunday excitement; she had been used to be wound up like a seven-day clock, and she missed this weekly stimulus. So, she had two strong ties to Blindham. No one could manage her complaints like her own doctor; no one could give her comfort like her own minister.

It was now February — the sixth month of the "family compact;" and aunt, being called away to Blindham for a week, was assured by Dr. Snivel that all her complaints were worse; and, in short, that he was the only man who could keep her alive. And I might add, it took a few such as aunt to keep him alive.

The result was — the offer of a small allowance to enable us to live alone.

This offer was received by Ellen and me with great joy. We put it down upon paper; we added so much for curacy; so much more for Ellen's expectations, and so much more for mine; and at once an income stared us in the face so ample, that we sat up late talking of it, and went to bed just as happy as if hoping and having were one and the same thing.

Next morning we were in high spirits. Ellen said, "Now we are, indeed, independent." And so we were, after a fashion: we were independent of one set of ties, and we had not as yet felt the other.

One of my friends went to New Zealand, because he liked to be independent. He should have no tolls or turnpikes; no fusty office and dread of bankruptcy; no domineering master or vexatious clients, patients, or customers. This was quite true so far. But one day a master, named "Starvation," met him there, and said, "Sick or well, you must work." Another day a master,

named "Wintry Cold," sternly ordered that, under pain of death, he should swim his horse across a flooded river to his hut on the other side. Then Master "Brother Settler" very often dictated, "If you don't put up with my temper and help me, next time your horse is stogged he shall rot."

True as is this view of independence, it was clear gain that we had no aunt now to tell us of it: so we enjoyed this lull and lucid interval in blissful ignorance.

Prudence, my good old readers, is all very well; but please to remember, that Providence does not throw a veil over the future for you so mercilessly to take it off. See that distant landscape, when reft of its charms on a dull and chilly day, all nature seeming nipped and lifeless. Now look again, and see the warm and mellow tints, where the sun has poured a vital flood of golden light.—Such is life: so genial, so joyous, in the sunshine of youth; so cold a reality to wintry age.

Still time passed on, and some preferment must be found in three months more. These were the early days of the new parishes called the Peel Districts, formed chiefly in manufacturing towns. Ellen shuddered at the thought of those stacks of dark chimneys and high brick shafts gurgling forth volumes of dense smoke. She had once travelled through the manufacturing districts, whose rivers looked strong of the blue-bag, and whose population was hideous with bare purple arms and smutty faces; and she naturally dreaded the thoughts of living there.—Talk of the pleasures of matrimony! It has often gone to my very heart to propose to Ellen what would never have troubled me as a single man. However, most happily I heard of a Peel District in the pretty town of Lachford, a place which promised economical housekeeping, and a quiet, picturesque home. I was not long in applying in person to the Bishop of Z.

The Bishop of Z. was a character. He had been cast in a very different mould from other men. His whole time and energies, and no small part of only a small fortune, were devoted to his diocese, and the general interests of the Church. He was a man of great moral courage, and of strong antagonistic nature; and, like other men used to troublous times, he would perhaps rather raise a storm than sail in smooth water. If you wish to be popular in this world, you should always go with the stream. People will forgive you for doing no good at all, provided you never make bad for them. But the Bishop of Z. was so unwise as to go dead against the stream, which in his diocese was rather a foul stream, too. If applied to for advice, he would actually

commit himself to straightforward answers; and as to the usual evasive replies, I do believe the Bishop of Z. never used up half of them to the day of his death.

Then, he was so venturesome. He would fly at great game. He would not only, like his brethren, protect a poor curate whom he thought right, but he would let the wind out of any puffed-up nobleman whom he thought wrong. Unhappily, he wrote with a very hard steel pen, and vinegar in his ink. The smarting words of a genuine Z. letter have been known to stick and sting and to rankle in the wound they made for many a long day.

Few persons reflect that a Christian is a man leavened by the Gospel, but only a man still. And this man may have one talent, five or ten, in the way of natural impatience, excitement of the brain, or inward irritation.

The Bishop of Z. was evidently born with so many of these disturbing causes in his moral economy as to make a most unepiscopal constitution. Still, such as God made him, such he was: and perhaps the true leaven had not done little, because there was from the first no little for that leaven to correct. The Irish have a saying, that you must make allowance for a child who was "weaned upon pickles," and I think so, too.

Such, then, was the Bishop I had to approach. I knew the shortest and the plainest story would be most likely to prevail. To his lordship I was an utter stranger. He said, after much conversation, he would make inquiries concerning me, and I might call again. After a few days I paid a second visit; when he said my address, and health, and strength, and energy, seemed useful additions to the qualifications of which he had heard, and by using his name in a letter to Sir R. Peel, the church, when built, would be mine. Meanwhile, he could offer me a temporary curacy in Lachford, so that I might become acquainted with my future parishioners.

—"Then the bishops are vilified, you would tell us? We thought they never gave preferment to strangers—but all to their own private friends, and all by interest."—

That the patronage of our bishops is honourably distributed, I sincerely believe, not only from long observation, but from the reason of the case. Nothing but a hearty interest in his diocese can reconcile a bishop to the great labour it involves. That interest is his only stimulus and chief reward. Is it likely, then, that he would endure to plant thorns in his vineyard, by *preferring the unworthy* to oblige his friends? As well say that

the captain of a ship would hamper himself with a lubberly lieutenant or an ignorant chief mate. Bishops make a bad choice sometimes, but not often,—and designedly, never. It is no answer to say that they appoint their friends: for, who is there who has not more confidence in men known to him personally, than in interested recommendations or high-flown testimonials?

This I say as regards bishops at the present day, whatever may have been the errors of a past generation.

When I returned home, Ellen and I were as blithe and happy as birds on a May morning. All looked bright. There is such a charm in the new and the unknown. Now, I was to be incumbent of St. John's, Lachford. A new church was building for me, and a new parish formed—one, of course, to be moulded exactly according to my will.

While we were rejoicing and daily planning a remove, Ellen became every morning a little indisposed, and I insisted on her having medical advice. Mr. Elways paid her a visit, and soon came down-stairs laughing, and said to me, "You are going to some new parish, are you not?" I replied, "Yes." "Well, then," he said, "if I were you, I would be particular about the county; for, *it* may be a son, and a close county scholarship or fellowship, twenty years hence, may be had for asking for."—No time was to be lost. Evidently there was now a good family man's reason for being settled soon, and we took measures accordingly.

CHAPTER X.

WE MOVE TO LACHFORD—THE WIDE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN ELEGANT HOME AND CHEAP LODGINGS—MY NEW PARISH DESCRIBED.

When I left Greenside, my parishioners were sorry to lose me, and our twelve Sunday pensioners were no less grieved at losing Ellen; and many of them gave us some touching evidence of kind feeling. I had not served long enough for any parting gift; and simple Greenside folk had never heard of presentation plate: indeed, the thing is grown quite vulgar. A clergyman once told me he was resolved to reply, if ever he were asked (which he never was), *Nolo* teapot-*ari*. However, horses and gigs were offered for my use, and Farmer Dean's waggon and team kindly conveyed my goods and chattels twenty miles to the railway station; and on my last Sunday the church was crowded, as if for a farewell sermon: but I preferred private interviews for evincing private feelings. All the farewell sermons I have ever known, have been a mere sickly trifling with holy things.

I shall never forget the chilly evening in April that we entered Lachford, as we did, outside the coach: for, Ellen said she would begin as we must go on, and economy must now be considered. We stopped at the Mitre Inn. Ellen had said—that, like a brave soldier's wife, she was ready to rough it; and, indeed, that she liked the freedom and the adventure of the thing. Still, freedom from fire, till a dirty maid lighted it, with a smoky room and comfortless tea that night, and heavy bill next morning, was not the kind of adventure which fancy pictured at a time when no tenderness and comfort could be too great to do justice to my feelings.

I pity from my heart the widow or the orphan striving at economy at an inn. A certain sum they will have out of you: whether wine or wax-lights is the fiction, it little matters. A bill-ious sensation spoils all your enjoyment. Your room sounds as "Apartments" at so much. You read by "wax-lights," so much; you poke "firing" at so much; every meal loses its

refreshing character in a two-shilling or three-and-sixpenny association. Even the waiter's civility seems expensive; and when you think you have ingeniously economised dinner and supper in a "meat tea," he calls over the banisters, "Send up a cheap and stingy meal for Number Eleven."

This was the unsatisfactory state of feeling in which we passed two days, when I found furnished lodgings over a shoemaker's shop; for, the choice is small in a country-town. There was a horsehair sofa as hard as brick—with the usual indication of where previous lodgers used to sit down—rickety furniture and grotesque ornaments, and such a servant and arrangements as a shoemaker's ideas may be supposed to dictate.

Poor Ellen! How different is this, how very different from your former homes! How little do we know of the blessings of refinement, till thrown daily among people whose every habit shocks our delicacy, and offends our taste! "Love in a Cottage" sounds poetic; but "Love in Lodgings" sounds poor; and "Love up one pair of stairs" is distressing. It is easy to talk of contentment with small means—of "a genteel little income," and so forth; but, when a loud, vulgar laugh sounds through your floor, bad tobacco pours up your staircase, and your delicate wife is almost run down by a big, coarse fellow, with "Ask your pardon, ma'am," in the narrow passage, and is always nervous at moving out of her own room—yes, and when even cleanliness is difficult, and ventilation impossible, in a house which always smells strong of the lower orders: why, then, this is not exactly that form of poverty you bargained for.

Never mind, my dears; it can't be helped. Persons who do foolish things in this world cannot choose the shape of their own rod, and may be sure it will fall on the most tender and sensitive part.

Dr. Vine and his wife paid us a visit, and talked in a friendly, pleasing way, offering any kind of assistance in their power. Mrs. Vine, much younger than her husband, had just recovered from twins, so looked sympathetically at Ellen. The freemasonry in such interesting situations is wonderful among ladies, and, indeed, among mothers generally. My favourite mare will never pass a colt in the road but she pricks up her ears, and seems as if she would like to nurse it. Some doctors and doctors' wives called, too, and were very attentive; but I could see that they had an eye to business, though we were especially taken with Dr. and Mrs. Sackville. Then some of the small fry came, with the usual mixture of envy and vulgarity; for, they looked round at the room,

informed us of some well-known disagreeables in Chapley's lodgings, and said, "Of course, this was only temporary," while we were arranging our proper establishment.

Every one who has been at the sea-side even knows the waste and the pillage of housekeeping in lodgings—how hard to control expense! How much you spend, and how little you get for it!—We soon began to hope we might, eventually, find some house to ourselves; for, by this time, we had learnt the blessing of a proper home.

Dean Swift was certainly not of the number of sentimental writers, but he undoubtedly spoke truthfully when he said, that if a young couple married into poverty, their affection only served to torture each other. How true have these words sounded to me in the course of my many difficulties! A marriage of affection has many pure joys, but it winds up the heartstrings for the intensity of grief. If the old maid or the lonely bachelor think they have never known pleasure, a fond husband could tell them they have never known pain. My heart has been many a time wrung with anguish, simply because this or that trouble must be borne by my Ellen; and she has often been able to say, "All this were as nothing, but I know the sorrow it will give to him." But, to the honour of womankind, I must confess, that when a man does make a clean breast of a trouble, he often finds his wife has the more fortitude of the two.

However, I had every reason to be thankful for the choice I had made. My dear wife made light of every inconvenience as far as words went, but I could not help seeing the effort that it cost her. Every market-day I bought her a twopenny nosegay, though I could not offer it without thinking how poorly it contrasted with the flower-gardens and conservatories of other days. Still, her amiability and patience reminded me very often of my sister Fanny's advice, and of the "regular settlers," as she said, whom by this time I should have found in the Anna Croftons and the ball-room misses who were my admiration at home. The reader will soon see, that any such a wife *à-la-mode* would have increased my burthen till it crushed me to the ground.

It was now time to become acquainted with my future parishioners. The new church was not yet finished, and my duties were, for the present, confined to visiting in my new district. So, for a certain number of hours daily, my reader will be able to picture "Ellen at home," and not seldom counting the minutes to the return of the only companion and all the society congenial to *her feelings*, that she, for the most part, saw for many days to-

gether. One of those new districts rarely offers a sphere for a lady. Ellen made an attempt to visit the poor, and had always some sick women and children in whom to take interest; still, if there is not only no money to spare, but if there is not even the broth and broken victuals which a regular establishment affords, to offer as an earnest of kindly feeling—I do, indeed, pity any good lady who attempts district-visiting in a poor district.

My duty was plain. It was to work the problem of Dr. Chalmers,—"Given a district church, it is required to fill it with intelligent worshippers, exclusively belonging to that district." It is comparatively easy, by eccentric or interesting preaching, to draw a congregation from the parishes around. And it is a pity that certain clergymen do not reflect how uselessly—aye, how mischievously, they are employed, when, instead of adding to the number of the Christian flock, they are simply emptying their neighbour's fold into their own.

My district might indeed be a lesson to bishops and ecclesiastical authorities, to beware of local and selfish interests in forming a new parish. Almost all the poor of Lachford were assigned to me. My boundary reminded me of the most intricate of the Chinese puzzles, for the lines were drawn zig-zag, so as to take in the houses of the poor and to leave out the houses of the rich.

Here was, indeed, a sphere for a missionary. I am far from speaking against Foreign Missions, when wisely conducted. I do not believe that they exhaust the stream of charity which would otherwise flow at home. For, all their funds put together, bear no appreciable proportion to the wealth of the country. Charity is a virtue that requires exercise; and, in one sense, it is quite contrary to fact to say that "Charity begins at home;" for very often it begins abroad and ends at home. It requires at first the excitement of novelty, and touching, moving incidents. Such helps are indispensable for a large part of the world. I mean, those whose walk is confined to the Parks and the Belgravia of life, and whose charity never comes face to face with the father, faint with toil and hunger, yet earning still his children's bread;—persons who never dream of the fever-stricken mother—such things do happen—stitching for some elegant lady, little conscious of her doom, a veritable Nessussian mantle, with her typhus-poisoned fingers!

Still such places as "Spinney" (so my district was called), would, indeed, employ a mission much nearer home. I made "a

house-to-house visitation," with a book of vertical columns, headed with Name—Street—Number of Family—Ages (about)—Occupation—If Baptized—General Remarks. I need not say that they, one and all, were glad to see me—some for the honour of the visit, some for the novelty, and a few from early recollections of a village pastor. Many I found in such ragged wretchedness I could hardly hope to bring them to a church. Many were deadened in feeling by foul air acting on the brain like a narcotic, as also by ardent spirits which they craved to counteract it. And some were so hardly tasked for the wants of the body, that the Sabbath was pretty sure to find them late in bed in the morning, or standing listless at their doorway, or, perhaps, sauntering in the green fields all the afternoon.

Some good Christian people think that the Gospel is to do everything. But, sanitary reformers and early-closing advocates are its best allies, and are beginning at the right end. Six days' aërial poison to the brain, or six days' fretting of the nerves or exhaustion of the system, will cause the Sabbath-bell to sound in vain.

However, I found about twelve poor bedridden persons for my visiting list. Some had been early trained, and knew the way of salvation; and the rest seemed comforted by my visits, though very ignorant. Maria Sanders, I particularly remember, had formed a singularly low estimate of heavenly things. She was crippled and wasted away; and the mortal tenement seemed scarcely to hold together. So, one day, I said, "Never mind, Maria, all will be changed: there will be no pains or sorrows, and we shall have a new body, even a heavenly body."

"Ah! sir," she said, "I am so glad to hear you say so. I do want a new body very bad; yes, and I want a new *inside*, too."

Indeed, the sublunary notions of the poor are often very striking. A friend related to me, that once when he had rather bewildered than satisfied an old sailor with the texts he quoted, in answer to his inquiry as to what Heaven would be like, and what kind of happiness to hope for, the poor man exclaimed, —"Yes, sir, all very good, as your honour says—no doubt of it: but, says I, Old England for me."

At the end of a long day's work, Ellen and I went to dine at our Rector's, and met a few of the Church-building Committee. Some months, it seems, would pass before the church could be fit for consecration. We heard the news of the place; and, to say

the truth, we enjoyed the dinner: for, chops and steaks badly cooked, and close economy, had begun to pall upon the appetite.

The way the church was built was a curious history. Charity bazaars and collecting-cards—every one "to be filled up with twelve shilling subscribers," and "more, if you please"—had done their work: and a roomful of young ladies had directed envelopes, with "urgent appeals," by the hundreds.

The history of the rise and progress of this church shall be told in another chapter.

CHAPTER XI.

HISTORY OF A NEW PARISH, AND THE WAYS AND MEANS BY WHICH A CHURCH, AFTER TWENTY YEARS' TALKING, WAS BUILT AT LAST.

A LAND rich in hospitals shows there is charity somewhere, and a land rich in churches shows that there is piety somewhere; but it by no means follows, that every good institution was the immediate work of a good motive or a good man.

St. John's Church, in the new district of Lachford, is quite a case in point. "Never," said Mr. Burcham, "did I see so much of the corrupt motives of human nature as in getting up that church. Lachford was a close borough—some drunken freemen, and some sharp attorneys, who led them like brutes by the chain of their vices, could return two members to Parliament. Beer decided the freemen; the freemen decided the election.

Lachford was also close in another respect: old Dr. Vine had had it all to himself for many years—a very good man out of the pulpit, a very useless man in. He preached Tillotsonian sermons through an eyeglass, and through his nose: still there was no alternative; for, those who drank "Church and State" felt it more than their politics were worth to go anywhere else, however desirous they might be. Strange, horrible things, were done in those days. "In turning out an old chest in the Town Hall," said the clerk, "what do you think it was brimful of? Why, certificates of A B or C D having received the Sacrament so as to be eligible for office under the old Test Act!"—The Dean Rural visiting the same church was answered by the Rector himself, when complaining of the dust and cobwebs, "Why, the fact is, our sexton is such a drunken sot we can do no better!"

Then, Lachford Church was very heavy for the voice; and as the Doctor had little energy, and read in a most drowsy and monotonous manner, the service was as sleepy a performance as can well be imagined. One old woman, whom the Doctor was visiting *in a kind and* consoling way—for, with all the errors of my bre-

thren, by the bedside even of the dying pauper I am proud to declare that even the worst of us is seen to some advantage—said, "Sir, I haven't had half a night's sleep this week, but please God I hear one of your sermons next Sunday, then I knows I shall have a good nap." This story circulated widely in a sense less complimentary than the poor woman intended.

To all this stagnation, if we add the fact that there were some 5000 souls under this one pastor, and only the few who were literary ever heard him preach in his own tongue, we shall not be surprised to find that while the Church party in Lachford had gone on talking about building one new church, the Dissenters had actually built five new chapels.

I said there was piety "somewhere," or we never should have had our new church after all. So, every year the piety of the Bishop dictated a hint at the spiritual destitution of Lachford. Then the piety of the Archdeacon suggested another hint. These dignitaries used to be received at the Rectory, as also was "the deputation" from the societies, all very hospitably; so, sometimes they, and sometimes any other clergyman, who had happened to put a note of admiration in his *Clergy List* opposite the name of the one Lachford and the one Church!—or, opposite the one Dr. Vine and 5000 souls! also inquired if no new church were in contemplation.

The piety of each of these parties, I say, came in aid. In course of time, newspaper paragraphs more and more frequently announced church building in other places—ay, and in other parts of the same diocese: so, all conspired to say that things could not remain as they were—not for decency's sake, not for proper public spirit. There were not a few good Christian people whose piety also helped the cause; but the greater help was when the public spirit came into play, with bustling self-importance and neck-and-neck rivalry—no weak powers in a country town.

It so happened, fortunately, that Mr. Burcham the schoolmaster, and his friend Mr. Challen, the timber-merchant, were churchwardens at the same time. Mr. Burcham was always praising Mr. Challen, and Mr. Challen as frequently lauded the public spirit of Mr. Burcham; and one day, over a friendly glass, some one said, "Now if this long-talked-of church doesn't come to something in your year of office, gentlemen, it never will at all." A short pithy sentence has something ominous and something stirring in it; so this mere quiz and banter acted on the ambition of this dealer in timber and this flogger of boys, like the witch's salutation in *Macbeth*. "Then," said Mr. Burcham, "I

should like to be the man to lay the foundation-stone." "And I," said Mr. Challen, "would give 20*l.* to put the weathercock on the spire."

From that hour Messrs. Burcham and Challen vowed they would immortalise themselves. "They didn't mind if they did something the world called rash." It was rash — very rash, indeed — and much moral courage was required at that time of day, for such men to give anything above 5*l.* for a church. If the recorded fact that "This was built when Caius and Manlius were consuls," looked well in ancient times, what greater honour than a black board and gold letters bracketing the brotherly names of Burcham and of Challen? So they went about and talked for some few days about there being no public spirit in the town — meaning, of course, that they engrossed it all in their own persons; and eventually, after some conference with the Rector, Mr. Challen, being mayor, called a public meeting, with long notice, "to consider the propriety of having a new church to relieve the spiritual destitution of the poor of Lachford."

Meanwhile, two or three more, to whom "time was no object," seeing they rarely did anything with it, were added to their councils: and then Mr. Burcham gave a cabinet-dinner to Mr. Challen, and Mr. Challen had a yet larger party for Mr. Burcham. "Success to the new church," was drunk: as also "Church and State," which Mr. Burcham hoped never might dissolve partnership: though, probably, whereabouts they were joined, and the precise cuts that would part them, and which had the best of the bargain, he had never inquired.

After these two dinners, the new church had come to be talked of so much, that our churchwardens seemed taken at their word, and pledged in honour, as public-spirited men, to carry it through. They began for the honour of the borough, and were obliged to go on for the honour of themselves. In politics they were Tories — not that either of them could very accurately rehearse the articles of his political belief — few Lachford people could; but they voted on the Tory side, and were shown up at every slip in *The Whig*, a Dissenters' paper. So, soon there appeared an article, saying that "the Church party of Lachford having, like Rip Van Winkle, been sound asleep for the last twenty years, was likely to be thoroughly roused up by a Tory Mayor and a Tory Schoolmaster, the latter ambitious of laying the first stone; but the Mayor, with his every-day eye to the main chance, had bargained to put a bran new weathercock (typical of his own political career) on the top of the spire, as soon

as ever—*not before*—the said spire was built.—Very generous of him, no doubt."

Soon after, the Tory paper replied to their "foul-mouthed contemporary" in a way that pledged the whole Tory party to back up the Mayor.

By this time there was a new motive power, a new stream running through the town of Lachford; or let us say, a new current and a valuable trade-wind had set in. So, the masons, the architects, the builders, and the owners of building-land, were not long in swelling this stream and in adding their puff to this trade-wind, on purpose that it might turn their little machinery, or swell their sails, and bring grist to their respective mills. But, of all eye-teeth, those of the landowners were set the sharpest. Every damp pit for "rubbish to be shot" rose wonderfully in value; as also did quarry-stone; and owners grew churchmen and charitable all in a day.

One man, whose field seemed to be the identical place that Deucalion and Pyrrha strewed with stone, seemed wonderfully liberal in offering part as a present for the church, though Mr. Challen winked and said a church would give tenfold value to the remainder.

Another said he would subscribe 50*l.* if the church were built on his ground; at the same time asking a price to repay the 50*l.* and something more. And as to the stone that was offered, some of it was quite a geological curiosity, and a fine exemplification of what building-stone ought not to be.

Homer's race of "inventive men" is not extinct. The inventive powers of half the town and trade of Lachford were tried to turn this move to their own private account, and with just as little regard for the church as the turnspit dog has for the cook. If it is a sign something is going to happen when men talk to each other at the corners of the streets, all was going well no doubt: for, Lachford people talked of nothing else. Indeed, the new church was a positive gain in that dull town, if it were only to divert and ventilate the people's mind; for "there never was such a place for talking about each other's concerns as our town of Lachford."

Lachford diversions were rarities. Lachford fair was a time to look forward to, certainly, as also was the fair ball, where the county quadrille kept as clear from the town quadrille as if there were a dread of some epidemic. This past, there was nothing to talk of, except "how dull everything was," up to Christmas; and then, only the fat beasts and plums and raisins, all holly and

red berries, till they came to ring out the old year—as if they had had enough of the old gentleman—and to ring in the new year—as if they had everything to hope from the young one.

What wonder, then, that the idea of a Church Meeting—ay, and the Bishop to preside, supported by one of the borough members at least, and ever so many county gentlemen—that this should excite pleasurable sensations in the minds of all parties?

The day for the great Church Meeting dawned at last. Every one in the town had offered a luncheon to some friends from the country. The three Misses E. wouldn't rest till they had prevailed on their papa, a county magistrate, to come; though, he said, he knew it would end in their getting some money out of his pocket. Then Mrs. Vine was to fill the Rectory with Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth, who "had plenty of money if they would but part with it;" Mrs. Lyte, who subscribed to everything; and Mrs. Dyne, who, she was sure, ought to subscribe, for she was the widow of a canon genteelly provided for. This coterie was specially invited to lunch with the Bishop, the Archdeacon, and the first families of the county, who would thus see that our Rector's wife could introduce great people as well as they could.

The Mayor had a splendid luncheon in the Hall, and the timber-yard coat was taken off and the mayor's robes put on; and little Mr. Challen was for that day allowed to hand round the old corporation tankards to the first people in the land. Then the bells were set ringing, vehicles rattled in, all the town looked out, and the excitement was pretty general that day.

Mr. Challen was a practical man, of tangible results in pounds, shillings, and pence. Mr. Burcham was the same: he delighted in what he called business, and he would stick on "extras" cruelly; but for all that, when a father turned bankrupt I have known him give the boy the run of the school and the "run of his teeth" for nothing. So there might have been worse men than these to build a church.—Well, these two gentlemen had resolved on a surprise and an impression, no less than this:—

"The Churchwardens of Lachford: 25*l.* Mr. Challen; 25*l.* Mr. Burcham!"

All this they kept to themselves.

Just as the clock struck two, the Bishop of Z. was ushered by the Rector into the Mayor's room, adjoining the Hall, and he at once smiled so courteously on Mr. Challen—whose face became as red as his robes—that the little man expected the pleasure of a long and flattering conversation. But no man ever went straighter to the point than the Bishop of Z., and no man could convey more

without even speaking at all. So, Mr. Challen, all in a minute, found himself drawn into a quiet corner, and heard in a most confidential whisper, "Have you any paper for subscriptions, Mr. Mayor?"

"Yes, my lord, I have a ——"

"Headed with anything, Mr. Mayor?"

"Certainly, my lord; done in a minute:—The Churchwardens of Lachford, 25*l.* each."

"Allow me—The Churchwardens of Lachford, conjointly, 50*l.* — thus — much better — you see. Have this paper ready till I ask for it"— still all in a whisper — and then in the same breath, aloud — "It is your time, I think, now, Mr. Mayor. So, we will proceed to your Hall for this most important business."

All this, with his lordship, was the work of half a minute. The Town Hall was crowded with persons who came, because others came, "to make a day of it," or because the Bishop was expected, not one in twenty caring the least whether a church were built or not. The description of a public meeting in the Acts of the Apostles is true to life, — "Some cried one thing, some another; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together."

The Bishop took the chair, and, after all had joined in a Collect for Divine Aid, Mr. Challen was asked to tell the purport of the meeting, and then four or five others rose in turn, with the usual slips of paper twirling in their fingers, and enlarged on the spiritual destitution of the poor, and the efforts made for church extension in other places; and then the Bishop, with his usual tact, and a little touch of satire at the same time, spoke.

"It was, indeed, high time he was sent for. From Lachford lips he had now heard that one part of the town was as little Christian as Timbucteo; that pews were squared and red-curtained; and the poor had been treated much like the red men of North America, giving place before the white till they disappeared altogether. However, he must not now be severe, though Lachford had for years been the crying shame of the diocese, because the present meeting had virtually acknowledged the duty of providing for those they had so ruthlessly thrust out. And first and foremost" ("Where's that paper?" he said, aside), "here are your respected churchwardens setting a most excellent example, and one of these gentlemen also, your mayor — your mayor — yes — (as if a bright idea struck him) therefore the representative of Her Majesty; so nothing could be more in character with the present movement, for our friend Mr. Challen," he said, slowly

and gracefully, every eye in the room having time to centre its rays on the little man's rubicund countenance, "combined Church and State in his own person. Delightful that the movement should have originated in the laity!—(here was a hit at the Rector)—a fact that while it made us, in some respects, he feared, blush for the past, also gave bright hopes of the future. However, he would say no more. There had been words enough—now, my good Christian friends, for deeds. Yes, action, action, action! and the first to 'rush into the breach' were (holding up the paper, and shaking and cracking it, while pulling out his eyeglass)—were—

"'The Churchwardens of Lachford . . . £50.'"

"Hurray!" cried Sam Richards, Mr. Challen's foreman in the timber-yard, digging his neighbour in the ribs. "Hurray! hurray!" vociferated Mr. Burcham's first-class, who had been sucking lollipops all the time. Of course everybody then hurrayed—nothing is more catching. "Well done our side!" shouted, gruffly and half-intelligible, Tom Vicars, an idle, smoking Cantab, afterwards rusticated and sent out of the country. Still Tom did good service that day by keeping up the cheering.

The Bishop saw his opportunity, and glancing interrogatively round, as auctioneers do for a bidding, said, "I thought so: our—good—Rector, 50*l.*"—Hurray! hurray! And then looking up to the M.P., "Yes, and our worthy representative, 50*l.*"—Hurray! hurray! No lack of hurray—Tom Vicars took care of that, nudging Burcham's boys, till the ladies hurrayed, too, and waved handkerchiefs in their enthusiasm. A great man's compliments or a lady's smile has drawn, does draw, and ever will draw money to the end of time. Then, there was the rivalry and the sense of public spirit to edge them on. "What! should the Weston family be hurrayed, indeed, and have their names published, and the Fogle family passed by? No, never!" So, on they went, one after another, bidding from 30*l.* to 50*l.*, till there was at last a check—a slight pause. This was, indeed, a most trying and critical moment; but—with great presence of mind—Mr. Challen rushed to the rescue. "Mr. Bishop (oh! dear me! My Lord, I should say—thousand pardons), the money won't all be wanted at once—none under two months—and then three instalments in two years."

"Excellent! very convenient, Mr. Mayor," said his Lordship. "Then some of the tens and twenties we can take as both for this year and next—double, in fact." Several consented—others put down so much each year. The Bishop gave 50*l.* each year; and

the end of all was, that a meeting, consisting nine-tenths of people who only came as they would to a morning concert, made up a fund of 1500*l.* to start with.

It was a sense of gentility and the excitement that did it. Even charity (so called) can't fight in cold blood.—It was the ladies that did it; for, as Peter Pindar says, "The cocks fight better when the hens are by."—It was Tom Vicars' cheering and the Bishop's compliments that did it; there's nothing men will spend more on than their own vanity.—Persons subscribe at a public meeting for what they don't care, just as they bid at auctions for what they don't want.

Of course, a Committee was appointed to collect. But now all Lachford was committed to the measure, and it had "become a regular thing;" and people will always pay "for a regular thing," and to be in the fashion, quite irrespectively of the object.

This is no cynical denial of all goodness.—I admit there was true charity somewhere, and true piety somewhere, or no church would ever have been built. But God ruleth over all. Even the bad are made good instruments in His hands, and all the petty streams of rivalry, vanity, and ambition, are embodied in one great motive-power to turn the mighty machinery He hath created.

No goodness, indeed! will any one dare to say? Why, there was Andrew Bean, a clergyman's son, who had married for love his squire's daughter—squire died penniless, Actæon-like, eaten up by his own kennel of dogs. Andrew, a strong-backed fellow, have I seen dragging his sick wife about in a chair—couldn't afford a house, so "love in lodgings,"—well, he gave 5*l.* a-year.

No goodness! There was poor Miss Hatchett, who had but 50*l.* a-year and what she could earn by daily-governessing. Her sister married a scamp who deserted her: she died of twins, and both twins lived; and Miss Hatchett let them eat of her bread and drink of her cup. Even she gave 1*l.* a-year. That good fellow, Challen, told me he was so ashamed to take her money that he found her an extra pupil to make it up.

No goodness! I remember plenty of it. Why old Adam Hall, the sawyer, and his decent spouse, now past their work, had laid up in their money-box for the day of sickness or necessity some few pounds. Every penny could tell of a struggle between extra tea, or fresh meat that their "soul did love," and a high resolve that neither should follow the other in parish coffin to the grave; and now that money-box was unscrewed, a piece of gold taken out, and, with a vital faith we all must envy, offered with palsied hand as to the Lord.

False and hollow is the philosophy that would depreciate the aristocracy of birth: nay, where the guineas are medals in the school of industry, we scorn not the aristocracy of wealth: but, what if we could discern God's own nobility?—the great in moral victories, the pure in spirit and the great in soul, heirs of "habitations not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!" I have often thought I knew of one: her story may seem trifling, but it shall be told:—

Hannah Hutchins had been for thirty years a kind of lady-chamberlain, ushering many a little innocent into this evil world. Where there was money, she served for money; where no money, for a cup of tea; where tea was short, she "lent it to the Lord." One day, hearing a suspicious run-away knock, she hobbled down one pair of stairs in time to espy the saucy Tommy Martin scampering round the corner. Many an old woman would have armed herself with a short-handle broom—almost all would have committed "a breach of the *peace;*" but Goody Hutchins only thought it a pity that Tommy should have no one to "larn him better," so she gave up a penny a-week of her tea-and-snuff money to help his mother to put him to school! Really, this is as good a commentary on the Gospel as Corporal Trim's was on the Law.

"'Prithee, Trim,' quoth my father, turning round to him, 'what dost thou mean by 'honouring thy father and mother?''

''Allowing them, an' please your honour, three halfpence a-day out of my pay when they grow old.' 'And didst thou do that, Trim?' said Yorick. 'He did, indeed,' replied my uncle Toby. 'Then, Trim,' said Yorick, springing out of his chair and taking the corporal by the hand, 'thou art the best commentator upon that part of the Decalogue; and I honour thee more for it than if thou hadst a hand in the Talmud itself.'"

CHAPTER XII.

MY LABOURS BEGIN OUT-OF-DOORS — MY TROUBLES BEGIN IN-DOORS — MY FAMILY BEGINS TOO — AND ALTOGETHER THINGS LOOK SERIOUS.

As I had no church as yet to which to invite my parishioners, I made the most of cottage lectures. I had many small streets, and I endeavoured to secure one house in each in which some little congregation could be called together. "The Church of England," it has been said, "if ever it dies, will die of a new complaint called 'overmuch gentility.'" I was resolved that should not be my fault. With every tone and gesture I suited myself to the ways and habits of my parish Arabs; for Arabs they were, many of them, male as well as female.

Sometimes, while I was thus suiting my words, tone, and topics to their unlettered minds, the surgeon or some other person of education would come in; this always stopped me at once, unless the intruder would agree to stand out of sight, and allow me quite to forget his presence. This forcibly brought before me the difficulty of preaching to a congregation comprising the extremes of barbarism on the one hand, and of refinement on the other. A ragged population must have a ragged church or a room, with ministers and measures all to suit.

From my experience, I am convinced that a Church and the Church Service are not by any means the first step for converting — for it is converting — the heathen of our overgrown towns. It is not derogatory to our services to say that we may find an extreme case to which they do not so well apply. Our military system may be all very good, but "fix bayonets and charge!" was an order that required some little modification when tried among the Kaffirs. Our National Schools, with "cards of nomination," and "rules drawn up by the committee," was an order of things intended for the ragged regiments of our city Arabs; but, much to the surprise of some persons, it appeared that young gentlemen

are not the only boys who would never go to school if they had no fathers to make them.

Full-grown Arabs on a Sunday must be humoured in the same way. I found many would come to the end of the street for a cottage lecture who "had no clothes to come to church," and, indeed, no habits or inclination either.

In these lectures I could study and adapt myself to the exact sense and manner of my little flock.

The experienced counsel addresses a common jury one by one. He looks each in the face by turns, and tries topic after topic till the expression of John's eyes betrays that he is convinced. This personal style of address requires a limited audience. It is impracticable in a church; and therefore Church sermons suppose some degree of initiation in the hearer. As a means of teaching the first elements to the ignorant, or of converting the heathen, a Church and the Liturgy is about as little suited as Eton College and Latin and Greek would be to parish boys. Both are invaluable institutions within a reasonable sphere, but both require preparatory education to prove generally available.

Something like a locomotive chapel, if it were only a tent or awning to hold twenty or thirty persons, would be a good invention for an unreclaimed district. Certainly, the more splendid the church, the less chance there is of the poor man feeling it is intended for him. Corrugated-iron buildings, as at Kensington, cost only from twenty to twenty-five shillings a-sitting.

"For the purposes of conversion," said a zealous member of the Tractarians, "I find our Sunday services quite useless. I frequently look around my congregation of heavy, sleek farm-labourers, and see that scarcely one is joining in the prayers."

The Church Prayers simply serve to render the unreclaimed —those wholly unused to divine worship—too weary for the sermon: and it must never be forgotten that the sermon to such persons is the only tidings of salvation they can ever hear. It matters not to them that the Lessons, Epistles, and Gospels, form one beautiful scheme of instruction. You might as well expect a fly to see the symmetry of St. Paul's. The ignorant can never follow a connected system. The poor man's religion is the result of single texts, parables, and scripture characters.

Many proposals have been made for shortening our Church Service: but most remedies have involved evils worse than the complaint. I would suggest that the Bishop should, on application from the minister of any congregation seemingly exceptional, make a suitable selection from the Liturgy for their special

use. The evil is great—very great under the present uncompromising system. Intense and hearty prayer sustained throughout is to thousands a physical impossibility in church.

This remark applies less to the literary and professional classes. Such persons are little aware of the difficulties of those who have never been used to apply their minds.

As to educated persons, the Liturgy, though obviously capable of an improved arrangement, is as well suited already as we can reasonably expect in anything from the hand of man, where so many points and parties must be considered. When the singing is not too long—when the reader is not tediously slow, emphasizing, as some do, a list of Jewish names, or a page of ancient history, as slowly as he should read the finest chapters of St. John; and when the sermon is limited to twenty minutes (which is quite as long as persons ordinarily listen), then the service is over in an hour and thirty-five or forty minutes, and few persons would wish it to be shorter.

To speak here of the beauty of the Liturgy, it is precisely that description of beauty which—however much persons may feel bound to eulogise it—not one in ten, even of a West-end congregation, really appreciates. This it is easy to detect from the words and style of the eulogy we hear.

But, whoever will try to express the ideas of our Liturgy in other words, will find that the "sweet music of speech" rarely allows you to change a note. There is also a simple dignity and a certain Hebraic strength and majesty of words, which, it will soon appear, has exhausted all the treasures of the English language. Neither can there be a stronger confirmation of this opinion than we read in new prayers written for our occasional Thanksgivings or Humiliation. Such prayers are to the Liturgy very like what a Cantab's Greek verses are to Sophocles. They are nothing but "tags," or bits of liturgical stereotype.

To return. It will easily be understood that my people required to be taught to come to church, and they wanted a kind of preparatory school in the paths of devotion.

A church, with its services, to them was like a university to a child. They required to be taught "precept upon precept and line upon line." As to "being all things to all men," and adapting my services to my disciples, this I found to be impossible. I was clad in heavy armour; and, in order to be orthodox, I was expected, as it were, to use cannon to kill sparrows. So, with these restrictions, I did not look forward very hopefully to the opening of my new church.

Meanwhile, I persevered with visiting the sick and with cottage services, and by the time I had made up my aforesaid parish register I had some acquaintance with my people. "The way to a poor man's heart," said Dr. Chalmers, "is to enter his house. When there, many kind offices lie in your power. For instance, you may sign pay-warrants or club-certificates; you may read, or perhaps write a letter, or explain the whereabouts of the son's regiment in foreign parts; or help some poor girl, as I did once, to follow her husband, who had gone off with the recruiting-sergeant."—A ticket for a dispensary, a good word to the Board of Guardians, or an order for a parish coffin, may all become an earnest of good will.

As to cottage economy, setting up the stewpan above the gridiron, and doing the oldest things "the newest kind of ways," I was careful not to go too far in advance of their habits; for, by so doing, the very kind lady of the Rectory of C. was burnt in effigy the first fifth of November next after the commencement of her charitable operations.

All this was hard work. It is wonderful how exhausting it is to visit from house to house. A fresh supply of energy seems to be drawn from you, and more and more electric sparks to be discharged by every new object of interest. The foul atmosphere of cottages, especially in hot weather, adds very much to other depressing influences; nor is it a slight irritation to the nerves that almost all you do or say must be in defiance of constant interruptions. The steam of a washtub, the squalling of children, or the noises in the street, all make the reality of a parson's visits in a town parish very different from any layman's idea of it. We read of Christian heroism amidst fire and sword, so these things may seem slight; but when, in addition to the usual repelling odours of sick-rooms, parasitical little animals nestle in your sleeves, and you are afraid to handle anything without gloves, for fear of a very vulgar cutaneous complaint, then no mere flash of enthusiasm, nothing less than a stern sense of duty, will enable you to persevere.

The stirring occasion aids the martyr; and as to fiery trials, it is well known that a shower of rain will disperse a mob as well as bullets.

But my perseverance in the path of duty was tried in another way.

Ellen's spirits were affected, and her health required care and attention. Our close rooms and want of ventilation now began to produce a visible effect. Even the water she could not relish:

so, positively, the simple elements in their purity were now beyond our means! I was advised to keep her much in the open air, and not to leave her too much alone, and to do all I could to divert her mind.—The very day that I received that advice, a poor sick woman, living on parish pay, said, "Sir, doctor tells me to eat and drink all that is nourishing and strengthening, but where am I to get it from?" This was a lesson for me. At that moment I could, indeed, enter feelingly into the trials of the poor. "Beware," said the Bishop of Oxford, "of giving only the *parings* of your time to your parish." I am not vindicating: I am only relating. But I am afraid I did pare and cut down very rigidly the time that was to divide me from my pale and desponding wife. Mrs. Vine seemed kindly disposed; but poverty has a remarkable effect in keeping genteel people at a respectful distance.

Mrs. Vine soon grew tired of our lodgings, and began to make up for her inattention by hoping that we should drop in at the Rectory, just in a friendly way, whenever we pleased. But, without a maid to assist, Ellen found that dressing was a fatigue, and undressing and putting away was a fatigue again, at this particular period; and after all her trouble, a sense of obligation and inferiority marred our happiness when out, and returning to cold comfort was doubly unpleasant by the contrast when we came back; so, by degrees, that happened which ever will happen—reduced gentlefolks, however much they are respected, soon find that society loses its charm when they can no longer enjoy it on equal terms.

No doubt abstract virtue, and moral worth and respectability, have nothing to do with massive plate or braided liveries. And this truth we enunciated and told each other over and over again, a great many times; but, to say the honest truth, we could not, for all that, reason ourselves out of a certain creeping half-pay or second-class sensation. Ladies feel this more than gentlemen; and my poor Ellen, though she never confessed it till years after, found it was not so easy a matter to "hold up her head" in a shabby bonnet.

However, I did all I could to divert her: not that I was likely to be very amusing, for every day I had pretty well talked myself out of breath in the parish before I returned to her. Still, Ellen was interested in my success among the people; so we talked of that, as well as of "the short and simple annals of the poor." I had often thought of the difference she must have felt between the light-hearted buoyancy and spirits of the

lover, and the subdued and silent habit of the careworn husband. Yes, the time soon comes when fascinations pass away like froth, when the stern battle of life must be fought in earnest, and when a happy temper and a kind heart, in a husband or a wife, are as oil to our wounds and marrow to our bones.

One great difficulty with which we had to contend was to keep vulgar people at a proper distance. For, because it was evident we could not afford to visit in the better circle, the secondary set thought, as a matter of course, they could claim us for their own. We accepted one invitation in our ignorance, and the title of a "Reverend" in the party seemed to exalt them mightily; but we soon learnt that, as Bacon said of the iron and the clay in Nebuchadnezzar's image, we might mix, but never could incorporate. Ellen literally shrank and recoiled before the salient manners and the heart-and-hand advances of the Lachford gentlemen. We could not rival their free, coarse laugh, and boisterous mirth: we could not warm up to their temperature. So, we seemed cold and proud, and felt to them like two icebergs in the room.

These evening parties ended with suppers, and spirits-and-water afterwards. Then the conversation became rather free, and very personal. Some talked loudly of the cost of house-rent, and glanced at our living in lodgings. I understood their meaning—"that we need not hold up our heads so high, for we were poor."

It is a law of our nature that, where there is no doubt or uncertainty, we become tranquil and resigned. To this state we were fast advancing, and were agreeing to accept poverty as our portion, and to settle down composedly, like poor people, and to think no more about it than we could help.

Here was one dangerous corner turned. The most harassing and jack-o'-lantern chase in this life is trying not to suit ourselves to circumstances, but circumstances to ourselves. A little child who had never read of Canute, still less of Dame Partington, in Sydney's Smith's story, once said in my hearing—"Go back, sea, and not wet Miss Edith." But Solomon's idea of wisdom was to sail with the stream, to commit yourself to the ways of Him who holds the sea in the hollow of His hand, and to seek, with the least possible fret or friction, to turn in the groove His allwise economy assigns.

When we had already begun to be reconciled to our lot—since the world never stands still—something else happened to divert our minds. For, I have observed through life, that Pro-

vidence often sends a second trouble as a kind of alternative, or a counter-irritation, as well as a commentary, on the first. Mrs. Vine paid another visit, with some more patterns for baby-linen, and after a great deal of interesting conversation she advised that her doctor and her nurse, already bespoken, should have notice that their services would soon be required.

It is now time I should leave my reader to his or her own imaginations. If a child were any novelty it were different, but "when," as Charles Lamb says, "every blind alley swarms with them," and the poorer and more squalid people are the more they seem to have; when fifty yards of litter in every street in Belgravia tells of one at least, if not twins; when teething, and convulsions, and measles, and scarlatina, still leave enough, and more than enough, to keep the parents at their wits' ends to the end of their natural lives; I may fairly presume that I can hardly tell anything new about the birth of my little darling. Though it is wonderful what a stir is made in a house about a little creature that is no bigger than a rabbit.

No sooner was the child born, or even hourly expected, than I was set quite on one side in my small establishment, as if I were nobody. Economy was out of the question: what with the doctor and nurse, and the nurse's drinkables, and Mrs. Vine, and the landlord's wife, every one ordering everything that came into their heads, I was nearly ruined.

Before the dear little stranger had arrived I had thought, "What shall I do? I know nothing about what is right or proper on such occasions." But I soon found out my mistake: there were plenty of persons ready enough to do anything without me. My voice from the first hour was utterly drowned, and my very existence was ignored by the womankind up-stairs and down, and when first I went to see my own dear offspring the nurse just treated me with a peep, and then hinted I might make myself scarce, as if it were of the least possible concern to me. Indeed, though nothing could be more unfair, for it was not my fault, both Mrs. Vine and the nurse said something like, "Oh, yes! all very easy for you to sit there easy and comfortable, but ——" They meant to say that Nature had treated us too well a great deal. Then caudle, and ale and gin for Mrs. Mobcap, and biscuit-powder and "tops-and-bottoms" for the baby, all came in so regularly, that they seemed resolved that all due honours should be paid to the child, however little they thought about the father.

I was now forcibly reminded of Tristram Shandy's truthful

observation, that "of all the puzzling riddles in the marriage state there is not one that hath more intricacies in it than this—that, from the very moment the mistress of the house is brought to bed, every female in it, from my lady's gentlewoman down to the cinder-wench, becomes an inch taller for it, and gives herself more airs upon that single inch than upon all her other inches put together."

I now had many invitations. People said, "Now you are a bachelor you must spend an evening with us." Congratulations were heaped upon me, and healths were drunk in liquids of every kind but water, from gin-punch to champagne. I told Mr. Bolton, the doctor, that if it had only been a little later I might have had a house to myself; for it was so very inconvenient to have my wife put to bed in lodgings, as I had to sleep on the sofa: neither had I any bed to offer my mother, or she might have come and acted Lucina on the occasion.

He replied: "That is what everybody tells me. It never is convenient. I have attended some hundreds of little infants, and never knew one convenient yet."

In course of time, we had some handsome presents of caps and robes from the family, but all was a great deal too fine for us: for, nothing looks so beggarly as a fine-worked robe with a cheap tawdry nurse. Aunt Charlotte sent a silver fork and spoon after the old fashion, and suggested that, to enable her to stand godmother without a proxy, we should have it, as she wrote, "½ *baptized*," and "*properly christened*" when we came to see her.—Such were the ideas of a Holy Sacrament in those days!

Some of the Church-building Committee asked me to wait three months, and have the christening on the day of consecration.

Time was not standing still. Even the dull town of Lachford could not either talk of or toast one baby above a fortnight; and by the end of the month we had got rid of the nurse, and had returned her empty beer-barrel, and had hired a good strong girl to carry the baby, and on we jogged along the road of life—like a soldier's wife by help of the baggage-waggon—having added a great deal to the encumbrance and not one whit to the supplies of the common weal.

I christened my daughter in the old church with the name of Alice; and I had an amusing letter on the occasion from my old friend Brereton, in which he programmed the drama of life thus commenced with vaccination, teething, long-coating, and short ditto, measles, hooping-cough, and the full complement of youthful

complaints, as well as schooling, being danced, Frenched, Rollined, Humed, Russell-Modern-Europed, and otherwise accomplished, and then "introduced." He also allowed for one disappointment at least, and the whole year hysterical, ending with matrimony, and so far completing the circle to the point at which we had ourselves arrived. Such is life!

In my parish, meanwhile, I had begun the only kind of schools that seemed available for a heathen district, where we have to deal with children whose parents must be coaxed and humoured into schooling. Anything like a large National School simply attracts those who would otherwise find dames for themselves. And however ignorant these dames may be, I never could see a set of childish monitors—on an average rarely of ten years of age—who are the principal teachers in large schools, without feeling great doubt of the superiority of the system.

Now, just as ladies are coaxed into a little education by Mr. Evergoeasy, of the Catcham Universological-and-General-fitting Establishment, though the same mothers will not endure the rigid rules and dictation of a public school, even so I found that poor women will send their children to Mrs. Whipham, "quite handy, in the same street,"—who perhaps will mind the baby or boil the kettle into the bargain—though they will never endure the teasing rigidity of National School regulations, nor care to accept a ticket as a gift.

Soon I started two dames with twenty children each. The balance it cost me and my friends was about a penny a-week for each child, or at the rate of rather more than twenty-pounds a-year for a hundred children, and those ragged children such as would never have entered a well-disciplined school. This school-machinery was kept in order by my dropping in, unexpectedly, two or three times a-week and examining the children, as also by my saying a complimentary word in passing to the parents, and always giving them a preference with any charity distributions. By appointing one or two lady-visitors to each school, the system would be complete.

Consider the economy. Here, as parents pay part, we may have children schooled at twenty pounds a-hundred, and no cost for school-building. The Lachford National School cost eighty pounds a-hundred!

Consider the advantages. You teach those who most want teaching. This is the Ragged School principle. Also, since dames act as monitors, and visitors help the dames; and since each dame can bring her own flock to church, or to one large

Sunday-schoolroom, if there is one, a clergyman has all the advantage he can desire.

This system has far more moral influence—far more of real education in it, than any other you can devise. "All that the children learn in these big schools," said Hannah Mason, "is impudence and hollowing." Certainly, the large National Schools are better than none, and some are very good; yet the superiority of many is very questionable. The advocates of these schools speak of "the ignorance of old dames," as if child-monitors—mere parrots—were so much more profound; but, surely, dames are likely to feel some little instinct of responsibility, and may be presumed to be not quite as indifferent to bad habits in children as those poor brats called monitors. For, we must always remember that it is the monitor who really does the work. The idea that a single master should influence the *morale* of a large school can only be entertained by persons who believe, homœopathically, that the smaller the quantity is the greater the effect. At all events, dames are better for a Ragged District; and while they can only teach children to read, they are equal to all that is required of them; for, the clergyman and Christian friends must do the rest.

It was now drawing near the day for the Consecration of my new church, and all my mental pictures of that solemnity contained, as one interesting figure in strong relief, my good aunt, first of all, rapt in the quiet fervour of her prayers, and afterwards watching the very lips of her nephew—her "own dear child," as she always spoke of me—as he preached his first sermon where a pastor and congregation, till that day, had never been. She had said such a pleasure could never be in store for her: but something, surely, must happen to thwart a wish too engrossing for the state of this life? Such forebodings are natural on every great occasion, but in the present instance, I am sorry to say, they augured truth; for, one morning, Susan found her mistress in a fit. I was speedily summoned to her bed-side, but she never regained her consciousness, and died on the third day.

The first person I saw at her house was the Rev. ——, who was at that time one of the most distinguished of the Evangelical clergy—her favourite preacher and friend. He knew Susan as well as he knew her mistress, and saw the one at his church as often as the other. When he first came into the room, he was laughing at something which had just been said to him, and was in high spirits—too high, indeed, for my feelings at that moment. But the Rev. —— never imagined that nephews grieved for

rich aunts; neither, amidst all the scenes of sorrow he so often witnessed, could he afford to sympathise very deeply, except on great occasions. Besides, the Rev. —— was really a religious man, and, therefore, perfectly natural. He was by no means a man to encumber himself with that sanctimonious cast of features which pseudo-Evangelicals, whatever their temperament and flow of spirits, never venture to throw off.

There is a certain Maw-worm countenance—a certain enunciation of holy motives, which men really holy leave us to take for granted; there is a falsetto tone of cant and insincerity, by which unworthy followers disgust all honest men with the very name of Evangelical. Mr. Foster wrote an Essay on the "Aversion of Men of Taste to Evangelical Religion." It is not pure Evangelicalism which creates a prejudice; it is the affectation of it. And affectation, when analysed, is nothing less than a lie in a state of solution—a flimsy plating, through which we see the baser metal.

"We too often hear from our pulpits," complains the Rev. Canon Stowell, "a great deal of Evangelical sound, when there is not much of Evangelical sense." If it is laughable to hear the child use the language of the man, it is really painful to hear holy words, or the deeper mysteries of our faith, from those who are too much "babes" to feel them; and when we actually hear those sacred words from a preacher without the pretence of a meaning, but only as a kind of hammering and stammering for something to say; or when we hear them from a morning visitor, as a badge of his or her religious party—this is indeed repulsive.

I confess, therefore, that on this occasion I was quite taken by surprise with the free, manly address, and natural, unaffected manner, of the Rev. ——, for I had measured him by his imitators, and those who flattered and fawned on him,—by no means a small party in the town of Blindham; and it cannot be supposed, that when all Blindham had conspired to worship and spoil him —by notes of admiration sympathetically conveyed in church, and by slippers, cough-lozenges, worked markers, and presents of all kinds—that so much flattery and so much crotchet should be quite without effect. For, flattered he was, in all kinds of ways.

One trick of the Blindham tradesmen was, to take sittings in the Rev. ——'s church, and to quote his sermons to customers, and to have the *Record* newspaper on the counter. The Rev. —— was alive to all this, and talked shrewdly of its signs and symptoms; but he was, to some extent, the dupe of these pretenders all the same: for flattery never will be quite without effect.

Even the tea-and-Bible parties, so common at Blindham, were simply a silly imitation of things sound in themselves. But, because every Christian must revere the piety of two or three devout souls, who meet to "take sweet counsel together, and walk to the house of God as friends," it does not follow that it is wise to invite a party of twenty people, young and old, to show off their flounces and figures before and after a solemn exposition and prayer, prefaced with tea and muffins, and ended with cake and lemonade. I speak feelingly on this subject, because, when I was a boy on a visit at Blindham, I saw rather too much of this.

The Rev. —— knew human nature well, and drew forth from his enemies the remark, "He must, indeed, be a wicked man himself to be able so skilfully to probe the wickedness of others." Susan's church attendance did not deceive him. He knew it was more than her place was worth to do otherwise. And his first words to me were very significant: "If you will take my advice, sir, you will look well to the drawers and the purse, for Mrs. Susan seems to me to have lived on the blind side of Miss Austin for some time."

In the first days of distraction, excitement, and busy arrangements, I felt but little. The stroke of death, that deprives us of a friend, is like a shock from the paw of the lion or the tiger, which, it is said, paralyses all sensation—a providential mercy to its prey. But when my feelings had recovered their natural tone and circulation, I felt, for the first time in my life, that I had lost a friend; and this was a loss I had then but lately learnt to realise; for, at Lachford I was, for the first time, among strangers, being before used only to the family circle; and I then for the first time learnt that the courtesy of this world is a kind of barter, and that much of its politeness is only "give and take."

A legacy of 100*l.* was left me, with old-fashioned furniture ample for a small house; but my allowance, with all the rest of aunt's income, reverted to my father—a sad blow to me; but this allowance, I ventured to promise myself, he would continue to pay me as before.

How ungrateful, how unreasonable is a child! However kindly and tenderly nurtured, we leave—how readily do we leave!—the parent's roof; yes, and too often, just when our company would best repay the trouble of our youth; and then, after giving our whole heart to a spouse, on the first moment of difficulty we fancy that parent's arms are open still.—To all this delusion I do, indeed, plead guilty; but the time had come in which I was to be deservedly undeceived.

On approaching my father—he could not attend the funeral —I was shocked to see the deep lines which care and anxiety had graven on his brow. My poor aunt's anticipations had, indeed, proved but too true. Nothing but evil can come of a fever of speculation and hoping to "reap where we have not sown." "He who hasteth to be rich," says the Wise Man, "shall not be innocent." Certainly he has little chance of being happy. I met the family doctor at my father's house, and was anxious to know what was the matter. I found the Doctor talking to my mother when I entered, and I heard him say,—

"Yes; but I am afraid we shall never get that off his stomach."

I said, "Pray, of what nauseous burthen do you complain?"

"Why, the wretched South-Eastern Railway," said the Doctor. "Scrip, Shares, Parliamentary Opposition, and all: he has got all that on his stomach, I am sorry to say, and pills and doses have nothing to do with it. A good digestion is impossible, with such a weight upon his spirits. Besides, he can't sleep a wink; and I should wonder if he could: for opposition lines and luggage-trains keep running over him all night long—I wish the whole concern were at the bottom of the sea."

They only who have experienced such misery can form any idea of the sympathy which exists between a speculator's pulse and spirits and his railway shares. When one goes down the other does the same, till every drop of blood seems drawn from the pallid cheeks, and every spark of energy from the exhausted brain. Such was my poor father's case. The South-Eastern had ploughed furrows on his brow, and had shaken every nerve in his frame. My mother would watch tenderly over him; she would smooth down his pillow; she would chafe his hands and bathe his temples: yet all would not do, for her poor husband looked the very picture of distraction.

Mr. Meadows, the banker, paid him repeated visits, for he often wanted what is called "accommodation"—which means a mere lift on the road to ruin. I witnessed the manner and expression of this man of business during one of those visits, and never did I see such a picture of a poor creditor lying helpless at another's mercy, and hanging on the very breath of his lips. Indeed, the name of Mr. Meadows made all the family nervous. He had been always warning, and almost quarrelled with my father about his speculations.

The courage that will storm a battery or rush into the breach is common; but the courage that will meet an adverse balance or look a commanding creditor steadily in the face, and not quail for

time or respite—this kind of courage is very far more difficult to find.

How can I express my father's sorrow, or his relief?

The death of the best of sisters was like new life to him, because her property in reversion came just in time to restore his shattered fortune. I very soon saw how intimately my father's losses and altered position affected me. He was too full of his own affairs to think of mine; and he soon let fall expressions that betrayed how much comfort he derived from the thought that "Harry was now provided for, and off his hands for ever."

I remained but two days, and then I returned very much sobered, and very grave and serious, to Ellen. As she held up the baby to greet me, its helpless and confiding innocence seemed like a mirror to reflect my hopeless ruin. The sight of the dear child all but choked me, and I smothered it with kisses to hide my emotion.

However, after awhile we came to our little explanations. My dear wife made me, by her fortitude, quite ashamed of my weakness: though really I had no need to be ashamed: for, those are no selfish or unworthy fears which centre entirely in a wife and child. But our position now was not to be disguised: we had ourselves only to depend upon. Come what might, there was now no refuge or resource in the family home; the one dear, kind lady, who would have shared her last crust with us in the hour of need, was now no more; and my stipend of 150*l.* a-year, with 40*l.* a-year due to Ellen, and a little ready-money, was all we now could call our own! And the expenses of my church soon made this little less!

All this came out very seriously and thoughtfully from my lips after a fireside consultation on ways and means. At the same time I looked anxiously at Ellen, to see the effect of news so painful for me to tell. Far from being moved by it, she did not raise her eyes off little Alice, but said, "We shall not starve, Harry, on this small income. And just now the world looks to me so very different from what it did. My world now is all reflected in this dear infant's pretty eyes. Our clouds have gathered very fast, it is true; but our sunshine may come as suddenly. My feelings are now quite changed. I cannot trouble myself about vanity and fashion. I do feel that I have such a treasure—oh! what a solace and a comfort—in this darling baby!—a catch 'er—catch 'er—catch 'er!" tossing the crowing little innocent for me to play with it.

This reception of my sad story on the part of my wife bright-

ened me up, and made my burthen seem well-nigh off my shoulders. For, our troubles always seem less when we calmly measure the length and breadth of them. Add to this, one great relief in the midst of misfortune is that it generally gives us plenty to do; and we often experience positive pleasure even in contending with a pain. And so it was with us. We had now new sums to work, new calculations to make, and new arrangements for a house to be rented, to receive our legacy in furniture. Our wiser plan would have been to have sold the more bulky part of the furniture at Blindham, and to have moved only the lighter articles; but, like other young people, we had to buy our experience as we went along: so in a few days we had a van-load of chairs and tables blocking up the street to our new abode, which shrank into insignificance at the very sight of it.

The neighbours were all alive; they never saw such genteel luggage in that part of the town before.

Of course, haggling with brokers ensued before we could exchange tables and sofas for such as would leave us any room to walk round them. And it was vexatious to find that everything we wanted to take was worth a great deal, and everything we wanted to sell was worth very little. However, our house would hold so small a stock, that we settled down at last with a good supply of odds and ends, and with 20*l.* left of Mr. Griffin's legacy, in the way of ready money. As to Aunt Charlotte's 100*l.*, this, when paid, we both resolved to keep as a reserve for "unforeseen contingencies;" which did not fail to come, in the form of more babies, doctors, and monthly nurses.

When once settled on our reduced establishment we began very happily, because we were both determined to be pleased with everything, and set about feeling as philosophical as we could. We talked of the imaginary wants and conventional superfluities of the present age, and reminded each other that our income would have been ample in the last century—without considering how little that concerned persons with all the habits of the present; and I never came to one of the many moral remarks in my reading about "moderating our desires as a way of increasing our riches," and the like, without quoting it triumphantly to Ellen, and Ellen was just as anxious to save up bits of practical philosophy for me.

We said we had a snug little house, and so it was—snug and compact enough, with two sitting-rooms and three bedrooms, all very small. They did not take carpets much bigger than a full-sized table-cloth. The house was a brick-and-a-half thick, and we

could hear rather more than we liked of our neighbours on either side.

A cheap street has cheap company, and cheap street-cries, ballads, last dying speeches, monkeys, and hurdy-gurdies, all cheap, and by no means complimentary to our taste or discernment. There was also a trade carried on there in mutton-pies, flat fish, damaged fruit, and, indeed, whatever was suited to an income that made people not over-particular. All kinds of such dainties were paraded up and down Pump Street, with a very noisy description of everything, from fresh herrings to pickled salmon. At a house opposite I heard, when my window was open, a constant rapping and tapping that made me feel happy in being our side of the way; but I could not tell what trade was implied. At the end of the week, however, Mr. Gregson—such was the gentleman's name—called for my vote and interest. "Your word has some weight with the guardians," he said; "and I want to contract for the Union *bodies*." It proved that our neighbour was a coffin-maker, and had a most lugubrious pile of "shells" in his back-yard, and wood always steaming, to facilitate that ugly bend which makes man's last sad suit a most unsightly thing to behold. This discovery I carefully concealed from Ellen, for fear it should affect her spirits; and I am glad I did, for another reason: for, it so happened that the first child that was born in Pump Street had a few queer little marks on his breast, which I am sure would have been pronounced coffin-nails if its mother had known anything about it.

The mind, like a vacuum, will fill with something. If we only put our thoughts on a short allowance of genteel and respectable meditations, they will amuse themselves with trifles, or the petty concerns of petty people: and our minds, like ourselves, became not so particular what they fed upon. And so it came to pass, that not only our eyes and ears, but even our thoughts, by degrees, imbibed the atmosphere of Pump Street, and we felt an interest in its toiling and care-worn population.

I must not let my friends imagine that our habits were changed in a day—still less that a small piece of meat, to be carved sparingly with an eye to the morrow—that butter, not to be spread too thick—fire and candles to be lighted late, and put out early—wine and spirits to be things unknown, and even beer to be a rare indulgence, though many a depressing cause craved a stimulant—that these things could very readily cease to gall us. Still, the history of our neighbours made us feel rich in comparison, and so far did much to reconcile us to our lot. Though, the

worst part of all was a sense of servile inferiority and positive degradation. I have seen my poor Ellen, by a deep and burning blush of shame, betray the painful truth that certain menial duties and unaccustomed privations, in matters of sensibility or taste, had caused a conscious emotion into the very depths of her soul. But for all this, there was enough around us to show how many degrees are registered on the scale of human misery: and, one way to learn contentment, is to look down as well as up.

Frequently at midnight, or early in the morning, did we hear Mr. Frank Tinson moving next door. Mr. Tinson was clerk in the goods' office of the railway, and this cold and shivering official's rest depended every night on the punctuality of the trains; and, the more tempestuous or frosty was the weather, the slower was the travelling, and the longer the weary hours for the poor clerk to wait; and most chilly and cutting are those luggage-sheds at all times. "So," said his wife, "by the time Frank comes home, perhaps the fire is gone out, in spite of all that I can do, and the tea is stone-cold on the hob. Oh, dear, there never were such trials!"

Mrs. Tinson had a baby as well as Ellen, and the hedge of their two little gardens was not above three feet high. How, then, could they fail to make mutual inquiries, and to pay mutual compliments, and perhaps weigh their babies one against the other? Mrs. Tinson was "a good sort of woman," and hearty, if not elegant. Such persons always talk of themselves, and never for a moment conceal any opinions they have formed of your affairs. So Mrs. Tinson opened her grief and told her anxieties. All they received from the railway was 90*l.* a-year, and some little she could earn by helping Mr. Gregson in hemming shrouds.

Now this is not a very cheerful operation at the best of times. But lately "things had been very dull,"—by which Mrs. Tinson meant, that people must die a little faster to make it lively—so her earnings were of very little value indeed. "And as to Frank," she said, "no one knows how harassing it is to depend on such a place as his. If he catches colds and bad coughs—and these goods' sheds are windy enough to blow his hat off—he must say nothing at all about it, or he will be thought too weakly for promotion to a better place; and what is worse, if anything goes wrong, the upper ones are sure to blame the under ones, to escape the blame they deserve themselves. So, any day Frank may come home to me and say his place is gone—as John Eddowes did to his wife, who dropped down in a fit as soon as she heard the words—and we all are

penniless! Oh, Mrs. Austin!" she continued, "we do so envy you; for you can afford a girl regular—six pounds a-year I should think you must pay her? But not many people in Pump Street have more than a girl between two, or one between three sometimes, and fine quarrelling this leads to very often. But only think of such a place as yours! A certain 150*l.* a-year! That's near 3*l.* a-week to take to market with you, and no one to threaten to turn you out of your situation, happen what may. And then, there is no mistake about your having a basket-fortune besides; for Frank sees the hamper—a square one, he says, with a lock and two handles, and big enough for a fortnight's washing, and always the railway carriage paid."

"Really," said Ellen, "I am most happy to acknowledge that Mr. Austin's mother frequently sends us a hamper: but I never heard of a 'basket-fortune.'"

"Not heard of a 'basket-fortune!' Bless me! why, when fathers or mothers can't afford to part with money for a daughter in our country, then something in kind, as a part of a pig that they have killed, and meat and goods they can get credit for, and the like, and whatever they can grow or make, perhaps a little spoilt or a misfit,—all this is for the basket, so many times a-month, according to agreement."

This conversation—we excused its impertinence, as not knowing better—convinced us we were watched by many eyes, and wishful eyes too. And we soon found that Mrs. Frank Tinson's was by no means a solitary case, and that the incomes of Pump Street were not only very small but cruelly precarious; and when, shortly after, poor Mr. Crowley, the pianoforte-tuner and music-master, five doors off, was sold up, Ellen's eyes poured forth many a drop of scalding sympathy, as she saw Mrs. Crowley's stair-carpet waving, as a sad signal of distress, at the end of her own broom from the first-floor window.

This will give some idea of our fashionable neighbourhood. Our old Rector and one or two of the clergy spoke of paying us a visit in our new house; but Ellen very wisely wrote to Mrs. Vine, to request her to make known that we must be considered as in retirement for the present, though we look forward to some future day in which we might have the pleasure of receiving our friends as we could wish.

But I must explain the nature of our basket-fortune.

I pity the family of many brothers and sisters where one of the number has married on love and expectations, and left a fond mother every day to remind them of the plenty they enjoy,

and the struggles and short-commons of "those dear, silly young people." It is all very easy for the father to say "they must rough it," and turn the subject of conversation. It is possible that the brothers and sisters may say, "Why, they have made up their minds to it, and it's all their own choice;" but, the heart of a mother does not reason;—it yearns, it throbs, and it feels.

Accordingly, first of all, my dear mother tried if she could not prevail on my father to continue his sister's allowance; but after two or three headaches, real or pretended, as the only effect of her maternal suggestions, the kind, self-denying creature —persevering as fond mothers always are—set about the next best thing she could think of to relieve her Harry, and that dear Ellen whom her silly boy had been so thoughtless—she never could forgive herself for allowing it—as to bring down to poverty, and, what she called, downright misery and starvation.

"What can that basket be for?" said my father, the day it first made its appearance in the hall. "I never ordered it. No doubt it is intended for some other house."

"Never you mind, dear," said my mother. "I ordered it. Sometimes there are things we don't want, and Harry and Ellen would be glad of." And then she waited, I can imagine, to see how her circumvented husband would take it.

"Oh! oh! I see," said my father; "and I suppose, by the look of it, you will have it backwards and forwards pretty often. And it is big enough, certainly; one would think it carried meat to Newgate market." And then my mother kissed him and patted him on the back, and said she was sure he had no objection; and from that hour "that everlasting basket" became, for seven years, the very pivot of my mother's existence, the receptacle of everything my father missed and inquired after, and, indeed, the save-all and the drain of the whole family.

From the time that basket was first set upon its travels, sister Emily found, when she wanted a dress, that all liberty of choice was at an end. She must have nothing that wouldn't stand washing, turning, and dyeing; for mother wanted the reversion of everything for the basket. By degrees the "basket fever," as they all said at home, grew to a fearful height, and affected every movement in the family life. Brother Edward found mother no longer afraid of a gun. Rabbits and even rooks, as well as hares and pheasants, would all fill up her pie. Mother also sent fruit and a batch of preserves—an extra broiling in a white dressing-gown at the kitchen-fire, and in the

dog-days, is no slight proof of love—and vegetables, besides potted meats and home-made cakes, and eggs, and such a quantity of pork and bacon as made my father's pig-keeping a very questionable speculation, with honey and bottles of "pure milk for the children."

This will give some idea of the usual contents of the basket; though I do remember once taking out some castor-oil, some grey powder, pins and needles, and some half-worn brushes. "If they don't want it," mother used to say, when quizzed about her ingenious contrivances, "they need not use it, and they have plenty of poor souls who will be glad of it." But nothing was ever too trifling for persons who have no money for shopping.

None of the family really sympathised in the basket, if they added to its store. "It makes mother so stingy," said Fanny. "We hear of nothing but 'the basket.' We have not half the puddings even, to say nothing of treats and pic-nic parties, we used to have." Then my father, though he submitted, would always get a joke out of it; but the most cruel trial of all the dear lady had to put up with was the cook. It mattered not what cook she hired; one and all hated the very sight of the basket, as if it were death to their hopes and the very grave of their perquisites. All eyed it disdainfully, and one kicked it, as if to touch it with her hand were loss of caste; and "nearly all," said Fanny, when soliloquising on the basket some years after, "took care to talk of 'Mr. Henry's victuals,' and 'having relations a-starving,' and 'such a bare sitivation they never saw the like of.'"

But a mother's love long defied it all. Jokes of the parlour and sneers of the kitchen were all the same. Indeed, were it not that I have been blessed with an opportunity of making some compensation for having been such a drain on the family, I could hardly bear to mention it.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW MY NEW CHURCH, BUILT WITH MIXED MOTIVES, WAS CONSECRATED WITH MIXED FEELINGS — AND HOW CHURCH CHOIRS ARE NOT ALWAYS HARMONIOUS.

AND now the day for consecrating the new church was fixed, and all the clergy around were invited to meet at the Town Hall, and form a procession to the church. Little Mr. Challen had redeemed his pledge, and made his vaunting good. He had actually climbed the ladders from one stage to another, with giddy head and shaky knees, till he finally put the weather-cock on the top of the spire, and then threw up his hat as the old church bells pealed forth a merry salutation, and afterwards confessed he was very glad to find himself safe down again. Mr. Burcham also chuckled and rubbed his hands, as he pointed to so substantial a proof of his energies, and the two ex-churchwardens did all they could to look pleased with the result of their united efforts.

This, however, was by no means quite so easy a matter. For, after the feast comes the bill; and since some gentlemen had paid the debt of nature before paying their subscription to the church; and since others had been obliged to draw up certain schedules, which showed that they had, in a moment of church enthusiasm, promised their creditors' money instead of their own; and since a third class found just enough traces of Puseyism in the building to serve as an excuse for not paying "out of principle,"—Messrs. Challen and Burcham found their recent aggrandisement an expensive luxury.

This led to many sharp comments on the extravagance of builders, and the shifty conduct of certain members of their committee, who had had the presence of mind always to let Messrs. Challen and Burcham sign first, and not to be too ready to put their own names afterwards. And so it came about that, before this much-boasted church was presented for consecration, there was scarcely one of those one most forward in the cause who

had not been heard to say, it was the last church he would ever meddle with to his dying day.

This amused Tom Vicars greatly; so much so, that when they were debating about the day of consecration, Master Tom said, with much mock gravity, that he should strongly advise the least possible delay; for, certain public-spirited gentlemen seemed so truly penitent and sorry for what they had done, that he expected every day to see them make all the reparation in their power, and pull the offending edifice down again.

The consecration was a great event; chiefly, I believe, because it was understood that persons were to be admitted by tickets, and the Building Committee hugged their little patronage and privileges as closely for themselves and friends as other people. I may explain that an edifice is no church till it is consecrated, otherwise admission by tickets could not be allowed. The Gregsons and the Tinsons, and their friends up and down both sides of Pump Street, did not fail to beset our door, and could not understand that even the clergyman had but very few tickets at his disposal.

Mrs. Tinson asked Ellen how she was going to do about the baby; "for," she said, "those girls are not to be trusted. They will lock up the house, put the key under the door, run about in the crowd for hours, and leave an innocent baby to scream its little heart out. Ever since the Vincents' baby was burnt, people were being up to those girls a little better."

This advice, if quite unnecessary in our case, was very good. For, there are many young mothers who are not at all aware that ten pounds a-year, besides tea and sugar, will not surround their infant's cradle with all those guardian angels, in the form of maternal instincts and yearnings, by which alone Providence preserves the helpless little dears from being made pincushions in the day, or flattened and smothered in the night.

Mrs. Vine's womanly sympathies anticipated Ellen's difficulty. How could the youthful wife on such a day be absent from her husband's church? How could the tender mother trust a babe in Pump Street, and expect to find it alive, if she found any of it, when she came back? No, this should never be. Ellen must bring the baby to the Rectory, and leave it safely sleeping in her patent safety cot.

Now, any one would think a Consecration-day would be preceded and followed by days of unanimity and peace, with unruffled feelings, and all in unison with so holy an occasion. But, let me ask, what great event ever did or will pass off in this

selfish world without the family of Mr. Byends seeking "to turn it to their private account?"

The bone of contention happened to be this:—There was a churchyard to be consecrated as well as a church, and, if this were not prevented, the old churchyard—which even Mrs. Vine had declared was "a disgusting place," "a crying nuisance," and "they should never bury her there"—was in danger of being pronounced too full to hold any more. Tales were rife of every horror lately brought to light, and of bodies, not decomposed, being callously disturbed by the ruthless mattock. A respectable inhabitant once gave evidence that a certain grave was half full of water one day and empty the next, in consequence of the suction of Messrs. Malton's brewery pump hard by; and this, said Tom Vicars, fully and satisfactorily accounted for so much *body* in Messrs. Malton's beer!

But the world has changed little, except superficially, since St. Paul's day. Soon the cry was raised, if not "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" yet "Great are the rights and sacred the privileges of that heathen abomination, the old churchyard," and "the craftsmen, together with the workmen of like occupation," were soon called together and reminded,—"Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth." Just at that time it was treason to the Rectory to say a word against this vested nuisance. Old Dr. Dillon—who, after the prestige of being Mrs. Vine's own accoucheur, became by degrees the ever-present friend-at-need of all the embryo Church-and-States in the town of Lachford—he, at one unwary moment, let fall a word against the said churchyard, being bold enough to doubt the salubrity of earth reeking and clammy, with more putrescence than would pass away; and, unhappily, I quoted this high medical opinion, and soon was told in reply that the Doctor had better modify those notions, or else his tongue might prove a woful impediment to his teeth. Unhappily, about this time, somebody's kitchen wanted repair, and turning up the flagstones, which were rather ponderous, the curious cook deciphered "Sacred to the memory of," "Tribute of an affectionate wife," &c. Tom Vicars soon heard and published this joke, probably with embellishments. Tom Vicars was, as my reader will by this time have discovered, by far the best fun in all Lachford; and Tom said the most appropriate motto for a Lachford tombstone was "*Resurgam*"—"I shall rise again;" for old Bile, the sexton, took care to fulfil that prediction in a very short time. This affair of selling tombstones to pave the kitchens caused great scandal, though Tom said,

truly enough, if there were as many tombstones as there were bodies, future geologists would find vertical strata so compact and original as to puzzle them exceedingly to make out the proper series.

However, no abuse was ever yet so rank as to want defenders, and some said they never would have voted for the new church, if they had thought it would involve a new churchyard; and, up to the very day of consecration, proposals for a cemetery were made, and many other diversions were attempted, which kept part of Lachford in a very excited state.

The Rector's fees and sexton's perquisites were now so far endangered that the part I took on the other side did no little to widen the broad line which already separated the Parsonage House from Pump Street, as also to excite vexatious opposition to every scheme I proposed for the benefit of my new parish. For, I was not long in finding that people, high as well as low, are not at all above risking the happiness of the poor for no more worthy object than spiting the parson. But, though parsons like their own way as much as other men, I am proud to say that the spirit of the man within their breast often gives way to shield their poor and humble friends.

My church was consecrated on a Wednesday, and between that day and Sunday I had to provide clerk, sexton, and singers, mops and brooms, candles, coals, and many of the odds and ends of housekeeping which apply to a church. Singers, some would think, I might have dispensed with, considering the state of my funds; but the service without the change and variety of psalmody would, to the congregation, seem even longer than it is; and to the minister it would be beyond measure exhausting.

Ellen undertook to direct the cleaning of the church, and she certainly did keep it in a state of neatness and order that contrasted most favourably with the churches around. John Harrison was my sexton; he and his wife, who cleaned the church, did far more than they were ever paid for, and by their kind attention smoothed the rough and rugged path along which for seven years I was doomed to plod my weary way. "I would not allow any of those hassocks from the old church if I were you, sir," said Harrison, the first day. "Why not?" I asked. "Because, sir, they are full of fleas, all of them." This was true enough. Neither is anything more disgraceful than the fusty baize and ragged matting so common in churches.

The singers were a great trouble to me. Mr. Scrape, a second-rate music-master, undertook to furnish a choir at a low

rate. But I soon found that he calculated on having all his own way; and he only wanted the church as a place to advertise his quavers and shakes, and so attract pupils for music lessons.

Mr. Scrape was very proud of Miss Mary Valletty. She was quite his prima donna. Harrison said she was too fine by half,—"Poll Vallit" used to be her name, and she had better mind her shop. This Miss Valletty did give herself great airs, and with her professional affectation spoilt everything we sang. She was a very bold-looking girl, yet she actually asked for a curtain to screen the choir from the public gaze; for, she said, "It was really so very trying to be looked at." But I knew all they wanted was something to hide them while whispering to each other, and sucking lozenges—for a professional choir, in former days at least, was a very bad example to the congregation—so this I positively refused. However, troublesome as they were, it was three years before my parishioners would give me the means of replacing them.

The Apostles, we read, would not leave preaching the word "to serve tables," or, to keep charity accounts. But where the laity do not act the part of deacons and relieve us of duties secular and mechanical, no one knows how our time is wasted, nor—which is worse—how the pastoral tone and temper is ruffled and impaired. A Pastor should have nothing to withdraw his attention from his spiritual charge, or to divert his thoughts from meditating on the word of God. While visiting the sick and admonishing and teaching the ignorant, he should make observations for his sermons and decide on practical topics, and then he should have time for meditating on God's word, and for calm and quiet prayer and continued self-examination. For, the source of all a minister's power is personal piety and a yearning "that they may be saved." There is no eloquence without earnestness, and words to reach the heart of the hearer must come from the heart of the preacher too.

I speak from much experience when I say, that while a true pastor's life is one of prayer and preaching, all the secular details of parish business tend to break the train of holy thought, and dissipate his mind.

Nearly all the great preachers have had curates to assist in parish duties, and also a curate to read the prayers, and thus they have had the great advantage of entering the pulpit with thoughts collected, and energies unimpaired. Besides, they usually preach one sermon only, and all the powers of the week are collected as under high pressure for this single effort.

To preach effectively after reading the whole Liturgy is very difficult. Suppose that a speaker or a counsel had to read to the jury some pages of Blackstone for an hour before he made his speech: it would act as an opiate to his hearers and a damper to himself. All speaking would become dull and mechanical, and all attempt at impassioned eloquence would be at an end.

I can truly say, that from the day my church was opened, my energies (about the average) were overtasked. Every Sunday evening I was too tired to read or exert my mind in any way; and every Monday I was what we term "Mondayish," that is, my electricity seemed discharged and the battery required time to load again. I say nothing of the powers of mere soulless and mechanical readers of prayers and sermons, but any devout and earnest clergyman will testify that two full services in a large town church prove more exhausting than any other labour he has ever experienced. The reason is that, besides the excitement, loud reading tries the organs in a measured and unnatural way. In speaking, you can adapt your sentences to your organs; but in reading you strain those organs to suit the sentences. In the same way there is no fatigue in natural breathing; but try to breathe artificially with measured respiration, and you are soon tired.

If to the Sunday exhaustion we add the schools, the visiting, the charity collections, and one routine of petty parochial interruptions about the squabbling of the choir, pensioners' certificates to sign, parish pay to plead for, charity money to disburse or tickets to fill up, besides quarrels to settle, and subscriptions for dead pigs, or drawing up petitions for donkeys that ought to be superannuated, it will easily be understood that my nerves were continually on the fret, and my meditations as often interrupted; and as to my resolution to throw my whole mind into my sermons, and my whole heart into the delivery of them, there was far more than I had imagined to divert my mind and to damp the fire and ardour of the soul. Often have I wished for "seven men of good report" to relieve me, and that I could say with the Apostles, "But we will give ourselves *continually* to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

But such a blessed state of things it is in vain to hope for in our day. Let me warn you, candidates for the ministry, to be prepared to make the best of every difficulty. I felt I could never be too thankful for the mercy, that whereas my neighbour Frank Tinson served a set of men who were blind to what was good, and, perhaps, expected things impracticable, One only was

my Master, and One touched with a sense of my own infirmities, and while I did my best, He asked no more. Still, I confess it with shame, that sometimes I have done much less than I could have done, because thwarted in some boasted scheme which, after all, might have effected little good.

All that I would here enforce is, let the laity do what they can to relieve the clergy, and the way to induce the laity to do so is for the clergy manfully to help themselves. And as to preaching, so long as we do our best and have our heart in the cause, so long will our sermons be edifying, though less effective than we could wish.

I have now to say a little about the expenses of my new church, and its drain upon my income. But this deserves a chapter for itself.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HISTORY OF MY NEWLY-FORMED PARISH, AND HOW WE GOT ON WITHOUT A CHURCH-RATE.

I HAVE already said, my new church in the town of Lachford was at last finished and quarrelled over—an answer to the devout prayers of some, and also to the jobbing machinations of others. Some greeted every stone laid on its rising spire as likely to improve the morals of the poor—others, as sure to improve the property of the rich. All bills were paid, a meeting held to audit the accounts, and the building was consecrated, and so made a church, with the usual processions before that solemn ceremony, and the usual good luncheons, and bad speeches after, wherein everybody complimented everybody else, and every one looked pleased with every one because every one was really pleased with himself.

One year passed away, but not without my being every week reminded that, even for the care of a church, nothing was to be had for nothing in this world; for, the candleman, the smith, the glazier, the man who sold the sacramental wine, the man who put on, with the help of long ladders, the tile blown off by the wind, the man who oiled the sun-blistered doors, the woman who cleaned the church, and the woman who washed the linen—all, all asked one question, namely, said the clerk, "Who was to be responsible?"

I answered, "We can't delay these necessary orders. I must speak to Mr. Wilson. He was the most active in building the church; and the Rector of the town is also interested in the poor, for whom this church was built. But meanwhile, I suppose, I must pay the wages; and the mops, the dusters, and the scrubbing-brushes must be put down to me. Pray how have the tradesmen booked them already, Harrison?"

"All down to you, sir. You remember that the man with the ladders spoke to you, sir."

"Spoke? Yes, he did happen to say something in passing."

"'In passing,' you call it, sir! Please, sir, he stopped awhile at the corner on purpose to fix that job on some one definite, sir."

"Indeed! And the others——?"

"Mops and all, sir—wine from Carter's—glazier and all have spoken to you, and booked to you, sir. Very shy about church-wardens' orders, they most all are; because, when Christmas comes, everybody sends on the bill to some one else."

"Now, I had already many demands on my small stipend, what with school, soup, and blanket and lying-in-linen clubs: and, seeing things won't order themselves, and things must be not only bought by, but sold and debited to some one, and since the clergy—though not considered men of business (business being a thing which clergymen are almost forbidden to practise)—very soon find out the debtor-and-creditor rules of it, I felt alarmed at having a positive church-repair and church-housekeeping account daily set down to me. Accordingly, I hurried away to consult the public-spirited Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson was an old inhabitant of Lachford, whereas I had only come as a stranger into the place. He was much interested in the people from his factory and other local engagements, so I naturally looked to him to tell me how they intended their new church to be maintained.

This was quite a new idea to the man of business. "Repairs already!" he exclaimed. "What is money wanted for?" A short statement soon showed him that 25*l.* a-year was the least on which divine service could be decently conducted.

"Well, well," he said, "I see now. A clear account is always satisfactory. You must put this before our people at the proper time. I can't do much myself, having spent too much on the church already. A Repair Committee or a 'Stead-of-Church-Rate-Committee' would be the thing, not that I can work for you. Look at this heap of letters. And now, good morning."

This interview was so far from encouraging, that I next applied to our old Rector, Dr. Vine, an active man in his day, but one who, as some horsemen survive their nerve, so he his moral courage. He was one of those peaceable men who thread their way so softly through life as never to do any harm to any one. Very charming characters, certainly. The only drawback is, that such people are just as innocent of ever doing good to any one.

The silver-haired and silver-toned Doctor seated me cosily by the fire, and then put some coals on, heard my story, and went off

at a tangent with "the very same kind of perplexity that happened to myself forty years ago."

He talked of church-rates in the abstract. He scorned the idea that no one benefited by the church-rate but those who went to church; as well say no one benefited by the county-rate but those who went to gaol. Why, no one, he said, benefited more than the Dissenters themselves. What fun would there be in Dissent with no Church to abuse? The Dissenters, if once they lost the Church, would be like the quarrelsome woman who lost her husband, and pined and died for want of opposition.

In the middle of this discussion, Mr. Hoxton, the Radical bill-broker, came in, and our Rector tried at some more pithy sayings. But, he was only talking against time, to let my visit die a natural death. Well, he talked away with Mr. Hoxton, and said, among other things, "We all know, friend, that the Church of England is the poor man's church." "What?" said the Radical: "as well say that Leadenhall is the poor man's market! He may starve near one for lack of food, and starve near t'other for lack of knowledge, unless he can pay his way."

"But you'll admit," said the Doctor, "that the piety of our ancestors intended that the poor——" "Yes," replied Hoxton, "*intended*, I grant you. But look at your own church, Doctor—the rich have the best places, the poor are skulking out of ear-shot under the gallery, though few indeed are there at all."

"Well, but Mr. Hoxton," I remarked, "mine is the poor man's church—built for the poor. I am now come to inquire how we are to keep it up. A very trifle a-head would more than suffice, if——"

"You may well say *if*," he rejoined; "if you can find any one to collect that trifle. Did you ever hear of a kind of taxation which makes every halfpenny cost a penny for collecting?—I'll tell you what, young man; you, with this new church and no rate, remind me of a late story of a kind, fatherly sort of man, who was so green as to hold out his hands to take a baby for a young woman while stepping out of an omnibus. The young woman was off like a shot, and he had to keep the baby. Everybody cried, 'No child of mine!' So you are the gentleman who has this penniless church on your hands, and you are the gentleman who are likely to support it."

I now saw that both Mr. Hoxton and the Rector viewed my perplexity with that calm resignation which persons reserve especially for their neighbour's misfortunes. No assistance was offered me, and, after wasting the morning in this very unprofit-

able kind of parochial business (and a great many mornings may be wasted in the same way), and after disquieting my mind with sentiments, anything but pastoral, for the rest of the day, I tried to forget the subject, hoped for the best, and said things should take their course; and a very expensive course that proved to be. The year was soon closed, and my eyes were as quickly to be opened. What with repairing roof, throwing snow off ditto, man to clear pipes, hire of ladder for ditto, besides the mops and brooms before mentioned, I found that money paid and debited amounted to 31*l.* 9*s.* — no small deduction from a stipend of only 150*l.* a-year!

"And were the congregation so illiberal as to throw this expense upon their minister?"

There are some occasions — particularly where money is to be paid — on which every one waits for some one else to move first. Add to this, while we are all so taken up with our own liabilities, many days may pass before it comes to our neighbour's turn to be thought of at all, — "No," we say, "it is time enough to pay money when you are asked for it." So, at last, I made one or two calls, and talked of the church, and its want of a rate, and gave hints, but all to no purpose. Some said, they could not ask any one for money on any account: while others thought to be called on for money was "quite horrid:" so at last, I gave out a notice in church (at which I could see people touch and look at each other), and called a vestry meeting.

Meanwhile I prepared a very ingenious statement, "to be clear to the meanest understanding," and devised plans for swallowing the dose in quantities so homœopathic that no one should taste it, and explaining, most speciously, that with 2000 souls it would be only so much a-head, and with 500 houses only so much a family.

When a man's mind is full of anything, his friends are apt to scent his little weakness, and facetiously draw him out. I could not dine out, but my financial measures were discussed with a degree of mock-seriousness, as if I were Chancellor of the Exchequer. In short, you would hardly believe it, but my "thirty-one pound nine," for church mops and scrubbing-brushes, had become quite a joke in the neighbourhood.

When Tuesday came, dong, dong, dong! went the church-bell, and I was early in the vestry. My table had a business air, with pens and ink, and ruled foolscap. I stood saying my speech over to myself, and working myself up into a suitable frame of mind, but

— no one came. — Dong, dong! went the bell; the time appointed had passed, but "the more we kept on calling the more they kept on not coming." At last, two decent tradesmen entered: and after that Harrison, my sexton, came with two neighbours. He was a good-natured fellow, and had been after these men, and, as I heard, treated them with some beer just to come and save appearances; "he did feel so for master's disappointment."— The result was a resolution, made by *me*, moved by *me*, and seconded by *me* in reality, though others lent their names, "That a committee of three be formed to collect from house to house."

Of course *I* was the committee for begging, though two tradesmen supported me by their presence. One carried a red-covered book (a single page would have held all the names), the other a brown-holland bag, which preserved no little of its loose and flabby appearance to the end of the day. However, my colleagues knew the people very well, — knew whom to ask, and served, like keepers when we are trout-fishing, to point out the likely places.

One was rather discouraging: He said, "Two other begging stories had been round the parish lately — your subscription, sir, should have been before them — Jenkins's, the dairyman's, cow died, that was one collection; then the Vincents lost a deal of property when their child was burnt. Now, your story is not touching at all — most people, especially mothers, will give something for a burnt baby, but as to church-pews, tiles or gutters, nobody feels much for them." "Never mind," said the other, "we must do our best to get our minister out of difficulties. Stay — here's Burcham, the schoolmaster: he is very sore about the building expenses; still he charges me five shillings a-year for my boy's church-sitting. He can't have the face to refuse me." So saying, he knocked at Mr. Burcham's door.

Mr. Burcham was a tall, thin, perpendicular man, of vacant countenance: the boys (always apt at nicknames) called him "The Long Vacation." This important gentleman received us well enough, and honestly calculated his twenty boarders at so much a-head, and gave us five pounds, and had a long talk in the way of discount. This is common in collecting money. The more a man gives you, the longer you must expect him to talk about it. Then we missed some houses; "nothing to be had here," I was told: "offended because the church wasn't built in their damp field." Next, three or four decent people gave us a crown each, and after that I was advised to miss some more houses.

"No. 10 is a sad fellow; No. 11 subscribes for nothing; No. 12 will give us more impudence than he's worth. But — here is No. 13, Mrs. Clarke, she is sure to give something."

"Stay," said I, "allow me to pass Mrs. Clarke's door — she is ruined by doctors and doctors' stuff." The truth was, I visited the good woman so frequently, that she felt a personal obligation to me; so, to ask would be to demand. In such cases no clergyman can find it in his heart to apply. The charm is, "We want not yours, but you;" and who would sink the disinterested pastor in the grinding tax-gatherer?"

In all these trials of ministerial feelings, and of an independent spirit, four or five hours passed away. Here was an experiment of "a voluntary church-rate," as we intended to call it! There was, indeed, little enough of the voluntary in the matter. Nine out of ten either gave grudgingly or not at all. Mr. Black refused flatly, because he did not want a new church. Mrs. White refused "out of a proper spirit," because if the stingy old Gripham next street flattered himself that honest people were going to pay their own share and his too, she would show him that he was mistaken."—What was most annoying to me was that, of those who contributed, many who gave reluctantly made it a personal favour, and some who gave generously alluded so touchingly to recent sickness or distress, that I wished I had never applied to them at all.

This was the discouraging way in which my first collection passed off. As regards my parish, it was a day wasted, and worse than wasted, for it impaired my influence ever after. It made one half my congregation shy of me, from a shabby conscience, while the other half associated my visits with gas-rates, poors'-rates, and water-rates. The spell was broken, and my pastoral confidence destroyed. A hard debtor-and-creditor account was opened between us, and my dignity no little lowered.

After all this sad wear and tear of my sensibilities as a clergyman and a gentleman, 18*l.* out of 31*l.* 9*s.* was all I had collected. Ellen advised me to spare myself, and send the clerk; as indeed I did to one street; but he came back with a sorry half-crown, and assured us that "where there was no shame at refusing there were no pence to be squeezed out." Then, after wasting week-days, I was persuaded to spoil a Sunday by a "sermon to be preached, and collection made." This produced six pounds more; and even of this, two personal friends of my own gave two sovereigns! More disheartening still. By that time I had become as sick of

the collections, as my parishioners did not scruple to say that they were,—so I put up with the loss of the balance.

This loss, however, was by no means my only one. Every subscriber came to me, as if he could claim contributions in return for any absurd scheme he had taken up. Shortly after came on the annual collections for my school and soup and blanket-fund. Here also were "arrears due to treasurer," of course myself. Some now gave less, and some nothing, because they subscribed to the Church Fund, "which some of the school subscribers," whose names I cited as an example, "did not." The result was that my church collection did little else than rob my other funds, and leave a larger balance to the debit of the poor parson! For, so long as a clergyman becomes responsible for any adverse balance in schools or other parochial charities, so long will any new gathering, as for church repairs, come directly or indirectly from his own pocket. To allow his church and its arrangements to fall into disorder, would sacrifice all that honest pride and interest in his parish, without which the usual stipend would be in effect even far more inadequate than it is already.

When anything has proved unsuccessful, there are always persons to tell you how much better they could have done it for you. The art of collecting, I found, was quite a study with some people. "You should have had a larger committee, some of all classes. The small tradesmen are ashamed to say No to each other, but easily make excuses to you. Then, for the small gentry, those who stand shivering on the cold margin of gentility, as also for thriving tradesmen, let two or three of your *élite* set stand in imposing and expansive dignity before them, and they hardly *dare* refuse you!"

So far are collections *voluntary*, and such is the morality of a voluntary system. Who hasn't known the case of some poor gentleman's widow, so overpowered by the august presence of a deputation, that courtesy gave what justice to her family would deny.

I had fully made up my mind to submit to these indignities no more. So, when the time for the annual collection came round, I simply called on those who had promised a stated sum, and sent the sexton to take his chance—always a very bad chance—with a few more. The consequence was, that every year the balance was more and more against me. One or two little people told my sexton, that if the minister would pay them the compliment to come himself they would subscribe, not otherwise. In other

words, they would pay a clergyman, like a lackey, half-a-crown for waiting upon them.

In course of time the cholera broke out in my new parish, and I was so bold as to take the part of poor tenants, who pined and died over drains and cesspools, against that set of small landlords who buy up the worst of houses, let out these pest-houses and rats' castles to the poor, and live by grinding out the cruel problem of how to extort for the minimum of decency the maximum of pay. No man knew the town or the tone and temper of the people better than my sexton, John Harrison. He knew the little world of Lachford, the conflicting and interlacing interests of the people, and could descry three or four strong motives in one direction, where I could only see one weak one in another.

The pleasure of doing good, especially if a clergyman defends his poor parishioners, is a luxury for which he must expect to pay. Cottage-owners—hovel-owners, I should say—claim a vested interest in fever-dens and nuisances, and feel as uneasy as the very rats and vermin themselves at any indication of a change. I often talked to Harrison about my plans for delivering the poor creatures from all the abominations of drains leaking into wells, and all the active elements of typhus. I used to dwell on the extraordinary coincidence of there being, out of the sixteen cases of cholera, not one single case in which the avenging fiend was not, as it were, tempted to descend by the fetid exhalation of filth, from which even brutes turn away.

"This is all very good of you, sir," said Harrison; "but how about your church collection? All Lachford is linked together; landlords and tenants, brewers and publicans, make common cause. If you cross their interests, and offend one, you will soon find you have offended all."

This proved too true. The more I took the part of the poor, the fewer subscribers to the church! Tradesmen dropped off because I didn't deal with them; half-and-half genteel people declined because my wife didn't call on them; for, the clergyman, like the doctor, is often expected to serve as a crutch to help little people within the pale of that society to which they are always ambitious to belong.

By the end of my seventh year in Lachford, more than half the church repairs had fallen on me. One day Harrison said, "You remember Mrs. Williams, sir, who joined the Methodies? She couldn't afford us five shillings a-year: but she pays ten shillings a-quarter now.

"Indeed! But can you tell me how it is they pay so much to the Dissenters, and we collect so little?"

"Quite another thing, sir. They squeeze and we don't. Exclusive dealing is worth paying for. Then, there's the opposition and the pride of the thing. See how even a stingy man will pay money for a lawsuit—people that won't pay for pleasure will pay for spite. Only the good sort of people pay to us; the bad and designing, as well as good, pay to them. Add to this, they pay for their party, and standing, and tea-gatherings, and to feel they are somebody. So you see, sir, they get so much for their money in chapels; and in churches, besides sermons and prayers, they get nothing at all. Don't you remember, sir, that where you didn't deal and didn't visit, our church people didn't pay?"

CHAPTER XV.

THE CLOUDS GROW DARKER—I TRY FOR A GAOL CHAPLAINCY—A TRYING SCENE—MY HEALTH FAILS—AN ALARM, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

AFTER seeing the result of my church collection, my troubles were evidently on the increase, and unhappily the distractions of my position, and the exhausting influences of my labours both at home and in my parish, I was conscious, did much to impair my usefulness as a minister.

This was a sad reflection: for, before I married, I said I felt too "unsettled" for my office, and now I was actually too distracted! My life was one wearying struggle to make both ends meet. In every other profession it is a maxim, that without an easy mind and good pay it is in vain to expect good work; but as to the pastor, few persons are aware that you starve the ministry when you starve the man. However, as one advantage, there was enough in my daily lot to wean me from the world, and Ellen remarked that she never could have supposed that she should ever have lived to dwell so feelingly on the simple petition, "Give us this day our daily bread."

By degrees we became resigned, but not all at once. For some time we harped and hankered after what, as we said, we were born to, and we thought the world had not used us well: though now I see that we had not used the world very well: for, if every one were to marry, as we did, on nothing more substantial than love and expectations, the said world must certainly be filled one half with paupers and the other half with parish officers. Still, resigned we did become at last, and religion became our comfort and support in every trial. Indeed, we both grew old very fast in character. If every year in man's life opens more and more of the scheme of Providence, in our lives one year unfolded as much as ten. We now saw the drama of life by broad daylight. In genteel life we had lived, like other people, in an artificial atmosphere of conventional insincerity, and we found it very im-

proving to live without it. For, as to flattery, we were not worth it, and perhaps there is nothing of which poor people have so little.—"The deceitfulness of riches" and the false friends of this world, you would say, I ought to have known before, having so often preached it to others; but, for all that, I wanted adversity to preach it to me.

I do not mean to excuse my thoughtlessness; but there is something in the buoyant spirits and intense enjoyment of happy youth which acts like "the veil over the heart." We are apt to fix our gaze on things without too abstractedly to turn our eyes within. This veil soon began to drop off after we were once in Pump Street: though for some time we looked, as it were, naturally for the kind attentions of old. Trifling presents of fruit or flowers in summer would now have been doubly acceptable. Indeed, till we lived in town lodgings, we did not know the intense gratification of a nosegay, with all its associations with green fields and the sunshine of early days.

Presents of game used to come as regularly as the shooting season; but now, save my dear mother's basket, all was stopped; though anything for a change, to say nothing of the economy, would have been far more than a compliment in our humble state. But few people feel much interest in showing their taste in putting pretty bouquets in pretty papers, to be sent with such a direction as "Pump Street." Hares and pheasants are creatures of aristocratic breed, which after their patrician woods would quite disdain so low and mean a destination. And so, even the little accidents of gentility one by one dropped off. Our table had no scented notes—no basket of cards: not a scrap, but a plain kind of "post letters," was to be seen. We had no friends to direct notes very often, still less to pay visits.

Our neighbourhood, it is evident, was a very unfashionable one. The gaol was close by, and "going to Pump Street" had a very felonious sound, and a very strong personal allusion, among the common people at Lachford. We talked much to each other about friends being like swallows, disporting in the summer of our fortunes, but flying before the frost and snows. But, "Where is the satisfaction of sending luxuries to those who want the necessaries of life? We cannot alter their position, and it is hard to pay attentions that may not be misunderstood."—This is the way we are apt to reason: and the "nearest relations" keep furthest off, for fear they should be asked for anything. But, whether or not, we are sure to find, as Burns says, that "poverty parts good company," and we

seemed now in every respect given over to our fate, just as if poverty were an offence against all good society, and as if we were deservedly sent to Coventry, and could not be countenanced in such low conduct and ungenteel behaviour.

I now never saw poverty and sickness in a cottage but I did indeed realise the trial, and pitied the poor sufferers from the very bottom of my heart, and returned home much richer and more contented with my lot. Not that I was quite contented, for I was poor indeed, sighing not at all for luxuries, but literally for fresh air and things necessary for health and strength.

The alms of the congregation were always at my disposal; otherwise, I could scarcely have endured the sight of some of the more wretched in our lanes and alleys. All ambition, all thought of self—so hard to forget while in prosperity—soon passed away; and it came so easy and natural to me to make common cause with my poor people, that my heartfelt sympathy could not fail to add a winning influence to my words.

The effect of my household cares and family anxieties was really very curious to consider. I am not boasting of being good, but I must declare, that at the time of life of which I am speaking —from my twenty-sixth to my thirty-third year,—a comfortable rectory, sleek cows in the glebe, and a good account of tithes, would never have brought either of us to that subdued and knowing-when-we-are-well-off-kind of feeling which we now enjoy.

Still, all the distractions of my early struggles, if they increased my faith, did most seriously damp my energies and undermine my strength. Extempore addresses I found very difficult: for, I had no freshness of mind nor power to rally and control my truant thoughts. Day after day, up and down the narrow lanes and alleys, was my beat: and every month I found that more resolution was required, because my spirits and my strength were less. I had a fair average congregation, but they were not the poor and ignorant for whom the church was built. The only thing which would have roused and drawn forth from their Sunday lethargy the hard-worked mechanics and factory-people, was a degree of power and energy which it was impossible to command.

Without seeking any excuse, I truly believe that the exhaustion of a sole charge in a large parish gradually crushes all that is noble or inspiring in the minister, and leaves little but the mere animal machinery with which to work. Still, the fact that the church was built for the poor—I mean for the ragged and unreclaimed, and for those who required the first principles of

the Gospel—and the fact that, save some who came from curiosity, and a few who had an eye to the alms, the very poor hardly ever came—this did, indeed, trouble me.

The first thing that occurred to make me reflect on the unsuitableness of my church and its services for this truly pitiable class of the community was, that a charity bazaar was established in Lachford, and made exceedingly attractive to the poor. Still, only one or two dropped in; and they seemed to feel out of their element in the presence of ladies and gentlemen, and soon went out again. A little inquiry showed me that, though the poor were much disappointed at losing the sight of all the pretty things and decorations, still, when they found that they could not have the room to themselves, they felt the chill of exclusiveness, and preferred staying away.

This seemed too much like the case of my church. Soon after, I read the observation of a member of the City Mission:—Many of the poor will assemble with those of their own state of ignorance and raggedness for divine worship in a room, who would not enter a church; though perhaps the next generation, the children of such persons, may prove regular attendants at divine worship.

In this state of mind I went to consult a worthy man, from whom I had often derived much information about the habits of the poor.

Mr. John Tallen was a conscientious Dissenter in one sense. He had been born a Wesleyan, and the same conscience kept him to his chapel that keeps us to our church—for, ninety-nine men out of a hundred go by their conscience, just as they go by the church clock, without questioning the correctness of either. Mr. Tallen was a chemist. He mixed up pills and doses week-days, and had his little turn in a kind of hedge-chapel on Sundays. He was an excellent man in his way. He responded at our mayor's dinners to the toast of "The clergy of all denominations," and would vindicate his liberality by throwing in a half-crown to a church collection.

Mr. Tallen and I were good friends. My course was to say to the Dissenters, "Gentlemen, you know my principles: if you would co-operate with me, so much the better. If you only sow the seed where I cannot sow it—well; but pray, don't root up my crop to plant yours. Three clergymen, and one of them superannuated, I know, can augur but a sorry harvest among 6000 souls. Therefore, what you do, do heartily for the honour of God, and not, as I am afraid some do, from mere opposition to man."—

So, I didn't ignore the Dissenters; but I did what was right in my eyes and left them to do the same.

This, however reasonable, was not a very common practice in years gone by; but it answered admirably. The Dissenters of the parish of W. B. lent my friend B. a building while his school was under repair, while, for myself, Mr. Tallen painted a church for bare cost of materials..

"Where were you, yesterday?" I asked, one Monday, of Mr. Tallen, whom I found in his shop, pestle in hand.

"Poaching!" he replied humorously: "but it has been poaching where the sound of your guns isn't often heard. A sort of birds you can't get into your nets. You've heard of Hedge Schools and Ragged Schools: why should we not adopt Hedge Chapels and Ragged Chapels?"

"But what I am come to talk about is this new chapel of Jonists or Brownists: it is erecting so near you, that it seems some one is poaching on your manor, too."

"Exactly so, sir. That is just what I was saying. These people are firing away where our guns wouldn't be heard. Their game is a species of birds that we can't get into our net. Their congregations are Dissenters from Dissenters, and I hope one day to see Dissenters from them again, and I don't care how near us they may be either."

"Well, but what does it all mean?"

"Then, sir, I will explain: but you will allow me to employ rather an original kind of illustration. You know the round pond with the little island in it in Sir Alfred Burnett's park. I was recreating with my 'leading article'—so I call my wife—and children, and a bit of a pic-nic, in the keeper's lodge last summer, when sauntering with Mr. Brigham, the Scotch gardener, by that pond, I espied some green twisted osiers, like a dog-kennel, and asked Mr. Gardener what new dodge that was?"

"'Why, mon,' said Sandie, 'I intended it for the dooks to go into, but they never will. I am afraid it isn't dooks' nature.'—I immediately thought of your new church. You 'intended it for the *poor* to go into,' but they never will. 'I am afraid it isn't the *poor's* nature.' What can you say to that, sir?"

"Come—but the poor, that is, the ragged and the ignorant, do not go into your West Street Chapel either!"

"No, sir, but we are wiser than Sandie—we never supposed they would: we knew it was not 'dooks' nature.' There are certain social lines between which our people range. Above those lines they go to the church. How many of our chapels do

you find at the West End of London? Below those lines they go neither to your church nor to our chapel. No service suited to decent and intelligent people can possibly suit them, any more than if they were in New Zealand."

"And this new chapel?"

"This chapel is to us what our chapels are to you. It will attract chiefly those who would else go nowhere."

Mr. Tallen then proceeded to explain, that the Dissenters could rarely hope to command talent to suit the middle and the lowest class alike: but that some rough, loud-voiced, vulgar man in the tea-and-sugar line, who would disgust respectable tradesmen, had lately collected a congregation of outcasts, who would keep each other in countenance as to ragged apparel, and respond to wild and impassioned declamation, and buy his soap and candles in return. "So John Wakam," said Mr. Tallen, "serves to break up the fallows and prepare the way for better doctrine and better taste. But you, gentlemen of the Church, are like Sandie —you don't study 'dooks' nature.' Whereas we Dissenters accommodate our places to the habits of the creature."

"No," I replied. "It is not you who accommodate. You go on the free-trade principle, which in religion, as in other matters, is self-adjusting. But, if you Dissenters would only go hand in hand and act with us, what order, what ——"

"Yes, sir, *if, if,*—though then we should not be Dissenters any longer; and who would pay our ministers, without our own party and *esprit de corps*, I cannot tell. But I do so admire your *if*, sir.—*If* a lot of wriggling eels would only lie straight in a basket, what order! How easy to count them, to show them off, and the like! Well, just cut them across the back of the head, and stop all power and vitality, and you can have your own way. So it is with that slippery, refractory animal, called man. No, no. So long as there is any life and energy in people, Sam Slick would tell you 'tisn't human natur to expect sich a thing.' Man is a queer chemical compound—nine parts nonsense to one part sense. His self-will, prejudice, fancy, and caprice, are as much part and parcel of a man as skin, bone, and gristle are of butchers' meat. But more of this another day."

Dr. Sackville, a physician of much ability, and ready, as doctors very commonly are, to give advice to those who cannot afford to pay, took much interest in our company. His house was about a mile distant, on Harbury Hill; and to the fresh air and diversion for ourselves and children, which we there enjoyed, I am sure we owed our lives. Indeed, that good man has admitted

since, that we were pining for want of light and oxygen, and that to invite us to his healthful, happy home, and to a walk in his garden, was like administering the elixir of life.

Dr. Sackville was eminent for nervous complaints, and the advice he gave me I do most emphatically recommend to all young clergymen. Exercise, he said, is Nature's counter-irritant; therefore it is that men under strong excitement pace up and down the room, and madmen are never still. Again, the fresh morning air, laden with oxygen, is indispensable. This gives colour to your cheeks: whereas, a long morning in a close room as certainly pales the countenance and clouds the brain. Add to this, some change and variety by company, or by field sports, or something that diverts the mind while it exercises the limbs, is essential to a healthy brain. He said it *was very cruel of society, and contrary to nature*, to discourage fishing, and cricket, and lively parties in young clergymen; for such diversions were essential to a *sound brain*, and the want of them made men fanciful, and was the cause of many of the queer ways and actions for which the clergy are especially remarkable. Persons who live alone, or in one routine of monotonous habits, all become nervous and "crotchety."—"If you want society, you should not go exclusively among your brother clergy. Fancy a grocer eating figs for a change! Ideas deteriorate as fast as anything from breeding in and in. Thus the clergy condemn themselves to one class of facts and a dreamy state of mind."

After these hints, the Doctor conversed about my family circle, and ended by strongly urging that I would send my wife home to her relatives once or twice a-year. Soon after her father came to see her, and I took care to place my friend in his way. This was the beginning of her periodical visits to Bowdon, which proved much to the benefit both of her health and finances. First of all, travelling expenses were offered; then Alice became a favourite, and the shabbier she went the smarter she came back. Mrs. Horley also began to sympathise with Ellen. Like others of her sex, the step-mother had no want of lovingkindness when neither temper nor jealousy was in the way; and now the supposed depreciating daughter-in-law was merged in the courteous and attentive visitor. Still, no regular allowance was offered by the father. There is a very common kind of family charity, reminding us of the the New Poor-law: they will take young people into the house, but never allow any out-door relief.

About our fourth year at Lachford, it was announced that a chaplain was wanted for Lachford Gaol. The old chaplain had

only been paid 60*l.* a-year, consequently, to make up an income, he had served as chaplain to the Union at 30*l.* a-year. But since this only made 90*l.* he also took occasional duty. I have known him perform, when his rector was ill, five full services in one day. He has officiated at eleven, three, and six o'clock, in our very large and laborious town church, having previously officiated at eight o'clock at the Union, and at half-past one o'clock at the Gaol. He was a man of a full, fine voice, of great strength, and "famous wind," as had been often proved in his college racing-boat. But nature at last gave way. His nervous system was shaken, and palpitation of the heart one day stopped him in the service. However, he took some brandy as a stimulus, and tried to preach the sermon, but all in vain.

Dr. Sackville said, in a way that I felt intended as a kind hint to me, "Harrison must have perfect rest, and not even the thought of any work passing through his mind, for two years to come." But I said, "He cannot afford to be idle; he must exert himself. What can he do?"

"The truth is," answered the Doctor, "Harrison is a bankrupt—I mean, in point of health. He has been living on the capital of his strength instead of the daily supplies: and, see the result! Many a man does this in my profession, and in other kinds of business; and though we all pay the penalty in the same way, we are not likely to come to so sudden a stop as a clergyman. Any man can rise from a sick bed to visit a patient, or to advise a client, but not to stand in one position for an hour, and to try heart, and lungs, and brain, all at the same time, in reading the Service."

This sounded to me very ominous.

Harrison shortly after came to apprise me that he had arranged with his relations to leave Lachford; also, that the magistrates would now carry out their intention of securing the entire services of a clergyman at 300*l.* a-year and a house adjoining the Gaol.

I was immediately anxious to apply for this chaplaincy; but how could I propose it to Ellen?—The idea was so repulsive, to reflect that I had taken a lady from Bowdon Hall to live almost in Lachford Gaol!

However, it was not long before Ellen herself remarked that the appointment was very desirable. Poor, dear creature! she had now come to a state of mind to call anything desirable; because, want of money, with an increasing family to feed, clothe, and put to school, is a stern reality that makes any matter of

mere taste and inclination seem fanciful indeed. Just then I read, as an advertisement, in the "Times," "Wanted, an insane lady to take care of;" and I said to Ellen, "We can understand that now. If this wretched advertiser does not encumber herself with a lunatic, perhaps she is ready to go mad herself."

Next day I provided myself with a list of the county magistrates, and set about collecting testimonials. One letter did really seem satirical, for it ran thus:—"And for these reasons I conscientiously believe that the Rev. Henry Austin is in every respect a fit and proper person for Lachford Gaol."

This gaol duty was by no means light: the chaplain was required to enter all visits in a book, and to record, in effect, that he had endured never less than four hours' imprisonment every day of his life! Still there was no want of candidates. One county magistrate, who sent me a testimonial, wrote, "You are the fourth gentleman who has asked me to send him to gaol." Of course the testimonials were more or less complimentary, according, not to the merits of the candidates, but to the style of the writers. Some were evidently written out of vanity, to be read with a flourish on the day of election.

Ellen took all the highflown superlatives as facts, and I believe that I was weak enough to like them rather than otherwise; and one night, after tying them up with a piece of green ribbon, we went to bed so sanguine, as to be really happy in my prospect of success: but—all in vain! I really do not believe, judging from the creases in the paper, that they were ever opened at all. Ellen said she was sure they never were: and, she "only wish[ed] she had been up to their tricks; for she would have put a stitch or a wafer to try."

The choice was evidently made before the election was announced, and the advertisements were a sham to keep up appearances. The chaplain-elect was John Day. Now, all Lachford knew John Day, and though he was a good-natured fellow, he was most unfit for any such appointment, and the choice was regarded as an imposition on the rate-payers. It soon came out that the whole thing was a piece of county jobbery. For, John Day had married old Attwell's daughter, with a certain allowance, to cease as soon as he had preferment.

"A nice man is Mr. Attwell, forsooth," wrote the opposition editor, "to talk of jobbery!—Who planned the gaol-chaplain job? Who changed the salary from 60*l.* a-year to 300*l.*?—Why, we could mention a gentleman who did all this, as a genteel way of keeping his own daughter out of the county-rate!"

"I heartily wish," said Ellen, "we had never given the subject a thought; for, I now feel far poorer even than before. These dingy walls seem closer and more odious than ever, because no longer cheered by one ray of hope. Before, I was contented and resigned; but now that I have allowed myself to contemplate escape, I find it so hard to shut my eyes again, opened as they have been — Oh, how foolish! how wrong of me! — to the length, and depth, and breadth of our misery. It is not for myself, for I can bear it all; but to reflect that these dear children may even live to endure the same is painful, indeed! It is easy to talk of going out in the world; but little did I think, to one who is poor, what a very hard world this is!"

I am ashamed to confess how severe was this trial. The worst part of all was, it robbed me of all heart and hope, and all that warm glow of sanguine feeling, which gilds and cheers the rough journey of life. But now all was disenchanted. We scarcely spoke to each other for two days: the present was too distasteful to talk of: and as to the future, Ellen entreated me never to propose to her any such fruitless endeavour again.

This will give some idea of the way we passed six years of poverty, and labour too: in the course of which three more children were born, and the money in reserve — increased from time to time by some ten-pound notes from my dear mother's little, very little pin-money, sent as a present to the baby, or to pay nurse and doctor — was all but gone.

It is easy to suppose that the increase to our family added most painfully to the toil and fatigues of both of us. Many a fine morning have I gone out early with a child in my arms — many a night have I been hushing and trying to quiet the baby, when my fretted nerves and throbbing brain alike claimed repose — and many a time has my very heart ached to see the poor mother, hardly recovered from her confinement, sinking under the burthen of her infant, because afraid to trust the fagged and weary maid-of-all-work, or the cheap girl who gave her services for her victuals, — a very small quantity of the one for a very large quantity of the other.

All this time we were never free from anxiety as to the result of my father's speculations. Though my aunt's legacy had relieved him once, I heard so often of Mr. Meadows' visits, that I was painfully suspicious a cloud was bursting in that quarter. Indeed, considering what a kind old gentleman Mr. Meadows was, I could hardly have supposed that the name of Meadows could ever come to sound, as it did, so ominous in my *ears*.

And now my own health began to fail, and Dr. Sackville's frequent remarks about my excessive labour and anxiety, as tending to undermine my health, were all directed to the same point. Still, I could not realise his cautions, because my life was one state of excitement.

Wonderful is the connexion of the mind and body. If you overtask the brain, you spoil the digestion, and cause too small a supply of blood to the brain.

All this I began to experience. The doctor saw the blow was coming; but I was too excited to attend to symptoms—I said that I must not fancy such things: I could not afford to be ill, and had really no time to think about my health. Strange reasoning this will seem, no doubt; but, notwithstanding, it is the practice with a great many. However, the same exhausting and dangerous causes, far from ceasing, were daily becoming more active, and were sapping the very life within me.

My dear wife's health now required far more than periodical visits to her father's house, and such slight diversions, to support it. Stimulants, I was advised, and the most nourishing food, were now indispensable; and her appetite was delicate, and required an expensive kind of diet: for, the cooking of our maid was bad indeed, and Ellen could no longer superintend it!—But what rendered the case more hopeless was, that the fond and anxious creature lost all relish and heartiness at her meals, from dread of expense. The wine and porter she would sip, with a painful glance at what remained in the bottle; and the thought of the morrow would spare the chicken or the jelly intended for the day.

I said that the County Gaol was not far from Pump Street. In the fifth year of our banishment to that ill-omened neighbourhood, a murder was committed so revolting as to shock the whole country round. The murderer was apprehended in a low house in my parish. His victim, an innocent and much-beloved young woman, living a few miles off from Lachford, had given no other kind of provocation than the possession of some few shillings, and, I blush to say it, some little maiden charms. She lived long enough to tell by a shudder the identity of her destroyer, standing between the mayor and his officers by her dying bed; and then, said her old grandmother, on the trial—"Her was quite sensible, for her chuz (chose) her bearers, her sung a hymn, and then her died. And 'twas a mercy, too, sarved as she had been."

An execution, under such circumstances, was sure to draw spectators from all parts of the county; and you may imagine how I congratulated myself on not being chaplain at such a time as this. Ellen looked upon our failure now as quite a providential denial of a foolish wish. John Day often dropped in, and excited us much with painful details.

I thought, at one time, of sending Ellen to the Sackvilles on the day of execution; but our obligations were already too great, and I allowed myself to think our house was far enough from the horrid scene. But when the day came I was doomed to find out my mistake. Ten o'clock was the hour of execution. At five in the morning the crowd began to assemble. Pump Street, being the principal and the widest street in that neighbourhood, was the thoroughfare for gigs and waggons, with crowded seats like Hampton vans, with tax-carts and vehicles of every make-shift description. People poured down in crowds, white with the dust of many a travelled mile. The place was like a fair: last dying speeches of every recent murder were bawled about up and down before our house, including the last speech of "this most horrible and blood-thirsty malefactor." Coffee-stalls were set up for refreshment, and beer-cans clanked with revolting discord in our ears. Ellen soon felt her dreadful position, but it was now too late: she was afraid to leave the house, finding a difficulty with the children, but she became every hour more and more intensely excited.

The rumbling of wheels, the tramp of hurried feet, and the cries and sounds that met her ear, brought the horror more and more vividly to her mind, till at length it came with an agonising reality to her affrighted senses. She could almost see the chaplain—and deeply did she feel for John Day—at these last sad moments of a chaplain's duty. Her imagination could almost "body forth" the criminal trembling at the yells of the indignant rabble. "Never mind, my dear," I said; "this crowd will soon disperse. All will soon be quiet—the hour is all but come."

The clock struck ten. She breathed hard; looked like marble; and then sank swooning into my arms.

Poor thing! She had no health or spirits to spare for such unnecessary trials; and much did I reproach myself. This event made our residence more distasteful than ever. Some, I know, will say, that religion should have been our solace. Well, so it was. Religion alone made all this supportable. But refinement, taste, and all the habits of our birth and education, are blessings

that have this countervailing evil—they pare our sensibilities to the quick, and make us exquisitely alive to pain.

I am well aware that there was enough pride,—enough of the living-quite-under-a-mistake character in both of us, to require this fiery trial to cauterise and burn it out; but moral reflections do not often occur till we have in some way got over the smart of the rod.

I now became acutely wretched: I found myself often in tears, and accused myself of weakness and childishness: but I know now that this was only one sign of overwrought nerves. I did not like to meet Dr. Sackville: for, his look was every day more and more searching, as if my face were a dial on which he could read the hours and minutes to my complete prostration.

One day, in the morning service, near the end of the second lesson—that is the trying time with clergymen, if at all indisposed—I felt such giddiness that I threw up my chin, I changed my position, and made all the exertion I could in a narrow compass to prevent stopping altogether. However, the sensation passed off for the time, though this was a beginning of an end to me. From that time my strength sensibly declined; Dr. Sackville heard from Harrison, my sexton, that something was wrong, and advised morning air and exercise, with a tonic, rubbing, and cold ablutions.

At the same time he urged me to make interest among my friends for some other benefice: for, in the nature of things, this exhausting labour could not last long. I told him that the death of parents on my side as on my wife's would quite alter our position. "If so," said he, "you must anticipate part of your expectations by selling some reversion, for otherwise it will come too late to do you much service."

However, the idea served to divert and amuse my mind for awhile, and so far did good; for, a ray of hope comes like sunshine to cheer the sorrow-clouded mind.

Week after week passed by, and great was my difficulty to hide the sad truth from Ellen; for, I saw her look at times most inquiringly and most piteously at me. And now the remarks of people out-of-doors were very trying. Every one who met me said how ill my wife was looking; and every one who met Ellen said how ill her husband was looking; and some remarked, how ill we both were looking: but "with such a parish and Pump Street, what could any reasonable people expect?"

We have often heard of the Voice of conscience, of a Voice from within, a Voice from without, and even a Voice from the

tomb, and all kinds of Voices; but the most admonitory and the most soul-stirring Voice of all is—the Voice from the cradle. How often have the quarrelsome, ill-matched pair, felt reproved and brought back to sober reason by the crowing of their common offspring! How often has the worn-out victim of this "world's scorn and the proud man's contumely" changed his desperate resolution, and resolved to keep his temper and endure once more, by that mute appeal of his infant's helpless state! How often have I, when my nerves were fretted and my whole heart was sick with toil and weariness, felt it impossible to stop, and that I must indeed do or die, because the Voice from the cradle pierced me to the very soul!

And so it happened at the time of which I am speaking.

I had gone home one day purposely to break the sad truth to Ellen, that my health was giving way, that rest and change I must have, and perhaps must take to some out-of-doors labour, and must till my own field, and live on scanty bread in a cottage, unseen and unknown; but just as I entered the room she held up and danced and dandled little Emmy, so innocently smiling and stretching out her little hands for me to take her, that I had not the courage to say a word. I felt new strength and spirit within me, and determined, though for the twentieth time, to take heart and try again.

About a year before this time I had heard of the death of Lord Oxton. My late pupil had succeeded to the title, but had soon returned to his continental rambles, to hunting in Algiers, and salmon-fishing in Norway; so there was nothing to prevent Lady Oxton from treasuring the memory of her dear son Sidney amidst the groves of Norlands, and shedding her good Christian influence on all the poor around that most patrician abode.

"Did you not say," said Ellen, one evening, "that the Lord Chancellor was once a visitor at Norlands, and as much charmed as all other gentlemen seemed to have been with that cruelly homicidal lady?"

"Certainly," I replied: "they were very good and sympathetic friends, indeed. But what of that?"

"Oh! never mind," said Ellen. "Time has passed on. I suppose Lady Oxton has lost all her good looks and fascinations by this time: otherwise, I was thinking you were a very great favourite: did I not understand?"

"Not from me, Ellen; you never understood it, I am sure. Lady Oxton was very kind to me, and seemed really interested in my welfare; but I am sure I never said so to you."

"No, no. It was not from you I heard it, but from somebody else. I remember, now. But I did hear that you reminded Lady Oxton so forcibly of her lost son, and that she felt quite pained at your departure from Norlands."

"And so you were thinking her interest with the Chancellor might avail just now?"

"Drowning people catch at straws; and you know that the living of Elkerton, just in her ladyship's neighbourhood, must soon be at the Chancellor's disposal. But we have had enough of disappointment. There is nothing for nothing in this world. I suppose Lady Oxton has some poor relations; most people have, and generally they are parsons. But—but——" And then she sighed deeply.

"Of what were you thinking, Ellen?"

"I was thinking then of my dear mother. She liked Lady Oxton very much, and I never shall forget the kind inquiries, day after day, made through Lady Oxton's steward, in my dear mother's last illness."

This conversation did not quite pass out of my mind. There was a small church, and small population, quite within my strength, wasted as it had been—with house and 400*l.* a-year! But so disgusted was I at the piles of applications I used to see encumbering Lord Oxton's table, for his interest for appointments of all kinds, from a tide-waiter to a consulship, that I had ever since regarded such applications as deservedly to be answered by a common form or circular kept for the purpose, and filled up simply with the name and date.

However, it now was most urgent that something should be done. The alteration in Ellen's appearance eventually wrought me up to such a pitch of desperation that my whole nature seemed changed. The reserve, and pride, and independence of the man had stood a long siege, but was sapped and undermined at last; and one night, when Ellen had gone early to bed, quite faint and worn out by Master Tommy, who was really like nothing else than a fat, restless, little sucking-pig, ever wriggling in her lap and rubbing his nose against her breast, I took up a pen and addressed a letter to Lady Oxton.

I cannot say exactly what I wrote. I only remember I had been pacing the room, and moving restlessly from one seat to another, till the thought suddenly came upon me, and I seized a pen—men just as suddenly seize a razor or a pistol when in that frame of mind—dashed off a letter in a hand as agitated as my feelings, and then rushed out and posted it, and thus pur-

chased a little hope and a little calm to my fevered and racking brain.

I sketched my struggles, and how long I had borne them, unwilling to increase the troubles of others, well knowing that even the most prosperous of my friends could not long be sorrow-free; but that I had a wife, daughter of Mr. Horley of Bowdon Hall,—her patient and uncomplaining spirit was beyond all praise, especially considering the tender nurture of her early years. I had also four children, who I feared would soon be motherless; and when I thought that the living of Elkerton, possibly within her ladyship's power to command, would support us through the few years that alone separated us from a little independence, I could no longer forbear disclosing our position, worn and wasted as we both were with seven years' toil and anxiety in the close and crowded town of Lachford, where we had been living on little more than 150*l.* a-year.

I said not a word to Ellen of what I had done. I had little hope of success. I certainly did feel that I had now a ticket in the lottery, and that was all. Still, it is a little heart's ease to feel, "Supposing the prize should be mine!"—However, no one knew better than I did that hungry and ravenous expectants hover about and await the fall of a rich incumbent, like eagles around a dying camel. I also reflected that Lady Oxton had seen many persons since she last saw me, nor could eight long years have failed to change the interest or deaden the feelings amidst all the fret and friction of busy life: so, next morning I felt that I had done a foolish thing, and I would almost have recalled my letter if I could.

I knew enough of applications made to persons of rank to be aware that a secretary is entrusted with all formal negatives, and that when a reply from a secretary generally comes by return of post. However, when the second, third, and even the fourth day had passed, I ceased to think any more about the matter. Then, our daily cares and anxieties dragged on, and another letter from my sister alarmed us by some ambiguous expressions about my poor father—his Railway, and the warnings of Mr. Meadows.

In this painful state of mind and feeling we were now living, and we had just returned one afternoon from our little marketing, when the girl said an old gentleman had inquired for us and left his card, and would call again. Our nerves were in that state of tension that the slightest thing would make them vibrate. So, up-stairs I ran most anxiously, and Ellen followed close behind me, to see the card. No sooner did it meet our eyes than we both

turned pale at seeing the ominous name of "Mr. Meadows!" At once the painful suspicion rushed into our minds that Mr. Meadows' forebodings, urged so emphatically for years about this dreadful railway, had come true at last, and he was about now to announce to me the hopeless ruin of my father, and, perhaps, the sacrifice of my small reversion, too. Ellen looked most expressively, and almost imploringly at me, and then sank prostrate and unstrung in every nerve upon the sofa.

Again and again we read the card, as if our eyes would burn it. It was simply "Mr. Meadows,"—that was all. So, Robinson Crusoe simply saw the footmark on the sand. Jeannie Deans heard nothing but her own name pronounced on the lonely heath, and imagination conjured up a train of horrors. But, "What time was he to call again?" This we both most anxiously inquired. "Dinnaw!" said Peggy. "Stay; but, my good girl, do try to recollect." "Din-naw," was—oh, how provoking is such stupidity at such a time!—the only answer.

Half-an-hour passed, while I looked many a time both up and down the street for the tall figure of a silver-haired old man. Ellen became more and more in an agony of doubt and fear. "Nothing can be worse than this suspense," Ellen said at last. "Now, my dear Harry, do pray inquire at the hotel if Mr. Meadows is there." I was just putting on my hat to go when a porter came with a note, of which the following were, I believe, the contents:—

"The Mitre, July 30th, 18—.

"DEAR SIR,

"I am sorry I did not find you at home, having business of some importance to despatch before the evening mail leaves Lachford. Allow me to request that you will come to me as soon as you can. Mrs. Austin should also enter into our consultations. To save time, if you have a copy of your marriage settlement, be pleased to bring it with you.

"Yours sincerely,

"EDWIN MEADOWS.

"To the Rev. H. Austin."

Our most painful suspicions were now confirmed indeed. The marriage settlement (not that I had a copy)! What could it mean? The object of the request in an instant came home as one dead shock to my heart. I had heard of such arrangements in tales of ruin. I and my wife were to be asked to sign away our

expectations in the future to save my father from present insolvency! I dared not to give utterance to the thought, but it was impossible that I could avoid this conclusion. Oh, horrible, most agonising was the trial! The ruin of my father, mother, sisters, on the one hand, and my dear wife and her babes on the other!

On receiving this awful summons we were too excited to delay a minute. With breathless haste we followed the porter to the place of meeting, though Ellen turned back as she was going out of the door, and passionately, or, I may say, convulsively, kissed the dear children, and then cast a last glance at them before clear of the room. We were soon at the door of Mr. Meadows' apartment, and I could distinctly feel Ellen's heart beat as she leant upon my arm.

On entering the room, the old gentleman rose and shook us both so kindly and sympathetically by the hand, that we almost pitied him for the painful duty he had evidently come to perform.

"I hope you are quite well, my dear friends," he said. "But well?—No, a long way from well, I fear. Your anxieties have been very great, no doubt."

The sad news we felt was coming now.

This was the prelude. Our hearts beat quicker than ever.

"But don't be down-hearted," he continued, after a pause; "we will see what we can do. Mr. Austin sends his love to you. He is much better—much better, indeed; because easier in his mind than he has been for some time."

Then, we thought, the sad blow must have come days ago, and we have not heard it till now!

After a pause—most painful to us—Mr. Meadows continued, —"Indeed, if you had seen how happy he and your mother were last night——"

"Then no harm—" interrupted Ellen—"no ruin, has befallen him! May we indeed hope so? Pray break the truth at once. Now, dear Mr. Meadows, you are very kind and feeling; but don't spare us," said Ellen, imploringly, "but let us know the worst——"

"No harm whatever, my dear lady, let me assure you—none. I am come on a very different mission. It is, indeed, not a word —nothing about Mr. Austin. How sorry I am that I should have alarmed you! No, no; ever since his sister's fortune relieved him from his difficulties, all has gone well with him. I have had no cause to scold him any more. Though, you remember, I used to scold him, and I was very plain-spoken, and almost quarrelled with him."

"But you wanted our marriage settlement, I think," rejoined I. "That did, indeed, puzzle me."

"Yes, yes—very true—Oh! now I see your fear and my mistake. This was quite enough to alarm you, fearing, as I did, these mad speculations. So, you really did not see what other purpose that document could serve? You must know, then, I come from the good and kind Lady Oxton: she hopes to procure you the living of Elkerton. The Rector is now near his end, and I am to consult with you as to what is best for your immediate comfort. Lady Oxton feels much for your trials, of which the Archdeacon has also spoken; and it occurs to me, that since you would not like to be under any pecuniary obligation, and ready money must be wanted, your future expectations—when you have this living and its emoluments—will justify her ladyship in advancing you 200*l.* or 300*l.* at interest. Only, we stipulate that you must leave this place at once: it is evidently killing you. But—but—excuse me a moment."

The good man's heart was full to overflowing, and he was glad of an excuse to leave the room. After a few minutes—during which we were too much stunned to realise what seemed so much like a dream, and thrilling fears so suddenly changed to sanguine hopes were producing a strange revulsion in our breasts—Mr. Meadows returned, followed by the waiter with some wine, of which he made us take a glass. Still, the scene was almost too much for him. "Poor young creatures, so early tried!" I heard him say to himself; and indeed we understood that he afterwards reported to Lady Oxton that he was just in time to save us from the last stage of exhaustion in mind as well as body.

"Then, this is no dream?" said Ellen. "But are we really promised the living of Elkerton?"

"Be quite easy, my dear friend, on that point," said Mr. Meadows, kindly; "if not that living, some other, shortly. But it will be Elkerton, I have no doubt. The Chancellor has given a definite promise, or I would not have run the remotest chance of disappointing you."

"Oh, my dear children!" she exclaimed, and sank back hysterically sobbing in her chair.

The presence of Mr. Meadows, and indeed, regard for his feelings, served as a stimulus that I might not give way too, though really the glass of wine came very timely to my aid: for, nerves unnaturally strained will at the first moment relax, and then the tears of the strongest run down like water.

"A very pretty place is Elkerton," said Mr. Meadows, after a little pause, "and a fine bracing atmosphere. The Rector has laid out a great deal on the house and gardens, Mrs. Austin; and there is every comfort. I passed a night there the last time I went to receive the tenants at the Norlands audit. The repose and tranquillity of the retreat you will find most charming. But now, you must keep quiet. I did promise myself the gratification, an hour ago, of taking you back with me, and your children too; and I thought I could leave Mr. Austin to arrange. But now I see that a day or two of rest, to recover your composure and talk it all over with your husband, this may indeed be desirable ——

"So far my holiday is not quite complete; for on these happy errands—which, though very rare, have come before to-day to compensate for the scenes of distress and ruin which often tear and lacerate the hearts of men grown old in my profession—I do feel very childish. I don't like to lose sight of my reward or my toy!"

Mr. Meadows, besides being a country banker, acted as steward to Norlands, and was a general agent for landed property.

"Yes," he said, "I feel, like a child with a new plaything, that I like to take my toy home with me, so as fully to realise the happy day. You will be glad to hear that I looked in upon Mr. Austin last night, and told him all the happiness in store for you. Your mother, Mr. Austin, wept for joy, and would have come with me, I do believe, short as the notice was, if her husband had given her any encouragement; and then she started off, late as it was for visiting, to Mr. and Mrs. Horley, and told the news to them. Next post, I suppose, you will hear all about it. If you are equal to the fatigue, Mrs. Austin, we could easily billet the children among us. Indeed, I think we should all want you at the same time."

"Then this is no dream!" I said to myself. "For, here the little accidents, comforts, and courtesies of prosperity, which one and all shrank and shrivelled to nothing before the withering blast of poverty—all, all are following in the train of my returning fortune!"

By this time, Ellen—what with the relief of tears pouring out, and the stimulus of the wine pouring in—had a little recovered, and was composing herself on the sofa, where—not without many a glance from me—after a while we both left her, and retired to discuss the details of the matter at the further end of the room.

The information required about the settlement was soon given;

and when Mr. Meadows heard we had no debts, but that every week Ellen had received so many pounds, or shillings rather, to lay in her little stores from one Saturday to the next—that worthy old model of all prudence and integrity said it made him the more happy to help such persons: for, hardly ever had he known a case of "genteel poverty," without finding a great deal of very "ungenteel" conduct behind the scenes. However, he was instructed to make an advance of ready money equal to the occasion, and persuaded me to take fifty pounds, for which he drew out a voucher on account of Lady Oxton. At the same time he said he thought, that with a certain 400*l.* a-year, and a house, he should probably find members of our own family ready enough to advance money, and to keep us clear of the semblance of obligation to strangers.

At the sound of this, Ellen's eyes sparkled through her tears. To accept a living was honourable enough, but, though her once delicate little hands had often been soiled with menial occupations, her poverty had not yet impaired her self-respect. Lachford, she said, we could leave behind; but when once at Elkerton, she did hope to feel like a lady once more, with no unpleasant associations.

Of course we were not long in trying to convey to Mr. Meadows our sense of relief, and our grateful feelings to himself and Lady Oxton. On this subject it was not like the character of Mr. Meadows to let us say much. He stopped us by replying, "My dear young people, I have seen with my own eyes where you were living, and I can also see the ravages that care and anxiety have made in your health. My visit does indeed seem providential. Rest and quiet, and a perfect change of scene, will, I hope, soon restore those roses I so well remember in my young friend's cheeks. I have not forgotten, Mrs. Austin, and never shall forget, your dear mother. I think I see that mother now in you. Lady Oxton and I have often conversed about her. But I will not advert to that painful history further than to say, that when your husband's letter was received, her ladyship would not rest until she had taken steps to preserve the daughter, as she said, for the full inheritance of that dear lady's fortune, and—you should never want a mother's care."

It will easily be supposed that so painful a story as that already related of Mrs. Horley's death spread far and wide, and was not likely to be forgotten in the county. And here I cannot help remarking, on how little a point a crisis, great as life and death, will sometimes turn. For if, with the touching allusion I made to

my wife in my letter, I had not parenthetically mentioned "daughter of the late Mrs. Horley, of Bowdon Hall," who can say but so great and prompt an effort on the part of her ladyship might never have been made?

All this helped us to realise and digest our altered fortune: the suddenness of it did, indeed, utterly confound me. For, even if the living were ultimately promised me, it had never occurred to me but much painful anxiety and care for ready money, as well as a difficulty in leaving Lachford, must intervene, and perhaps my dear wife would not survive the interval of hopes and fears, and all the cruel law's delays.

"Come, now, Mrs. Austin," said our friend, "you must brighten up; though really it is not often I have the happiness to cause tears of joy. Indeed, far more frequently my visits are ominous of sorrow. A country banker's life is one that remains to be written yet. *Tales of a Physician* are commonly supposed to relate to a subject unequalled in interest: still, the Almighty Father tempers the chastisements which He sends us with feelings in unison with the occasion, and so far He alleviates our sorrow. But the sufferings I see are those which men bring upon themselves by covetousness, by hasting to be rich rather than to be honest, by blighted ambition, with envy, malice, and all uncharitableness, rankling in the breast: this it is that racks the mind beyond all endurance, till brain-fever or paralysis come, as it were, just in time to turn the reproaches of a host of angry relatives—many of them as guilty as the sufferer himself—into trembling and pity to see the strong man overthrown! These are the dark spirits which haunt my path; though frequently I can say, that had it not been for me—resolutely refusing to put off the evil day for a deeper fall and wider ruin—many a family that now holds together would have been at this moment eating the bread of misery."

I cannot describe how we parted from Mr. Meadows, still less how my dear wife hung enraptured over the children on her return. I tried to make her spare herself, and go early to bed; but the excitement was as yet too great. Alice, and even Freddy, were old enough to understand a little about the pleasure of a "beautiful house and gardens, and a place for rabbits, and a wire house for dickey-birds, like Dr. Sackville's;" and so we talked, and planned, and enjoyed pleasures, reflected in each other's eyes, and congratulated each other, till we were tired.

Meanwhile Peggy's ears were as open as her eyes had been before; and it happened with her as with ourselves, that she heard

of joy where—judging from the lawyer-looking gentleman, "come with an execution, perhaps," and our visible emotion and anxiety —she had, it seems, expected sorrow, and might very naturally have augured ill; for "being sold up," and such reverses of fortune, were not uncommon in Pump Street. And Peggy had told her fears to Mrs. Tinson's girl, and how she was afraid her place was gone, and that she should have to look out for another mistress. All this Peggy told her at the pump; for this pump, with a handle and spout in each garden, was common to both tenants, and was a place where, when these two maids-of-all-work met, words flowed forth as well as water. So, Mrs. Tinson soon "made so bold" as to step in and make inquiries; and as all that class of people are very emotional and demonstrative in their feelings, when the good woman heard the news she literally "lifted up her voice and wept." But we were by this time so well schooled in discerning a genuine and gentle heart, however deficient in gentility, that we were all the more happy for such humble but hearty sympathies.

It was now about seven o'clock, and a fine July evening, and Ellen said I must not delay to inform our kind friends the Sackvilles; and here Ellen wished to go with me. But this I resisted. Indeed, I trembled to look at her, she was so pale and wan, and evidently quite fevered with excitement.

It so happened that those excellent people had been talking of us that very afternoon. Mrs. Sackville was really attached to my wife. The Doctor said she loved her as a sister, and was often unhappy at the thought that Ellen's trials were bringing her to the grave. It may, therefore, be better imagined than described how they received the happy news. The lady was so overjoyed, she did not know how to vent or to express her feelings; but the Doctor had seen so much of the alternations of pleasure and of sorrow in this life, that he was not so easily elated: he simply squeezed my hand affectionately, and looked upon me with eyes liquid with softness and sympathy, and then sat quiet and thoughtful for a few minutes, and let his good wife do the talking for him; which part, also, she was particularly well able to discharge at all times: so Providence had matched her with a silent husband, as one way of maintaining the balance of power in the realms of speech.

This lady, too, had known her trials; and there was a time when she would but too gladly have changed lots with Ellen. This sad occasion was when her Edwin and her Matilda—two children out of five—sickened of scarlet fever, and were carried away from their pretty frilled cots and luxurious nursery—venti-

lated on the Doctor's own principles: but all would not avail—one of the little dears in one week and one in the next, each in a pretty blue and silver-plated coffin, for me to bury in the quiet grave.

At length the Doctor broke silence, and interrupted his wife with these words: "We can find room for all the children, can we not, if I go and fetch them up here?"

"Room, my dear Teddy! There is too much room in our nursery," said the lady with a sigh. "Yes, Ellen was so kind to my dear babes; and now hers are doubly welcome to the same little beds, though I know I shall fancy my own darlings are come back to me when I see hers sleeping in the same cots. But yes—yes—do pray, dear!" she said, in her usual state of excitement; "do go and fetch them, this very night, and Ellen and I will rejoice together; and she shall tell me all about it; and I will plan with her about moving and travelling, and all that—Oh, dear! well, this shall be a happy evening; quite like a scene in a play; all going to be so happy to-night; and all, I fear, so painfully anxious only this very morning—I am so delighted at the thought—I'll order the carriage, and John and Mary shall ——"

In this manner the kind woman was running on, and venting all her hearty feelings, when the Doctor said,—

"Stay, my dear! but I am not so sure whether we had better do so to-night: though every hour out of the unwholesome air of Pump Street is something gained. But fatigue must be considered, and I am afraid you will talk to her too much."

"Why, as to that, no woman can talk less than I do," said Mrs. Sackville, quite unconscious that she all the time laboured under a constitutional complaint, which we will call a "violent determination of words to the mouth."

The Doctor made a little excuse and a kind of conjugal apology, and then he turned to me and said,—

"You, my dear friend, yourself want a little care; but Mrs. Austin, I must, on a trying occasion like this, treat quite as an invalid, to prevent her becoming such. You and I will go down quietly and take the carriage. My nurse shall come and help us with the children, and meanwhile my kind wife shall prepare a bed. Remember, my dear, directly Mrs. Austin comes, she must be shown to her bedroom. I shall administer something soothing. The youngest child may sleep with her; that will give play to the affections and do her good, and all possible excitement must be avoided. Painful experience, as well as my reading, has taught

me that the revulsion of feeling and the agitation of mind consequent on sudden good fortune, is more to be feared than the stroke of adversity — though, here we have both!"

Mrs. Sackville was made now to understand that the joyous and romantic evening she had promised herself must be delayed. Never mind. She was just as pleased to act nurse; which office she performed very well, indeed, save that while she was enjoining silence on every one around, she kept forgetting she was herself talking all the time.

And so it came to pass that an all-wise Providence, having humbled us both to the dust, having made us many a time look back with deep contrition at our folly and mistaken feelings in counting Susan's sauciness or our dear aunt's little fancies and over-care among the intolerable troubles of this life, and having thus brought every string of the human lyre into that state of tune and harmony, which nothing but adversity ever can effect — the same merciful Providence, which caused us to awake that very morning to a sense of poverty and a troubled spirit, by sunset had plucked every thorn from our pillow, had shifted the scene to one of affluence and repose, and had laid us to sleep, overpowered with thankfulness for the united mercies of both our neighbour and our God.

Next day when Ellen awoke I anxiously inquired how she felt, and most agreeably surprised was I to find that the excitement had done her no harm. After seven years of daily trials, with a little religious feeling, we learn to trust ourselves in the hands of God. What He wills must be, and we are but too glad "to cast our burden upon Him," believing that "He careth for us." So Ellen was not so much elated, and bore the change with thankfulness and composure. I could mention another of the critical periods of my life when I felt exactly the same kind of equanimity, and that no little to the wonder of my friends, simply because they had been less schooled than I had been in the instability of all earthly things.

Next morning we naturally awoke with the feeling, "Is this only a dream?" "Are we really so happy to-day, after being so unhappy yesterday?" — This question was answered by a knock at the door, and the Doctor with our letters, asking if he might inquire after his patient. He looked fondly on the mother with little Emily scrambling all over her, as children do in bed, and then he felt her pulse and said to me, "I wish I always had such patients as your good wife. I often think of the story of the Spartan boy who concealed a stolen fox under his clothes, even

while it was tearing out his vitals. For, such are the ravages of a hidden sorrow. You must indeed, Mrs. Austin, have borne your troubles well to suffer so little by the reaction to be apprehended from so great a change. But keep quiet, and you shall have your breakfast in bed: you will have plenty of visitors up here on the occasion, and I must spare you too long a day. My wife has not had her say yet, and I know there is a hundred-woman power of words under high pressure in that quarter."

"Oh, fie, Dr. Sackville!" said Ellen; "I can't allow this."

"Never mind, Mrs. Austin: don't you tell of me," said the Doctor, as he went laughing and highly delighted out of the room.

And now we opened our letters; for, some there were, both from the house of Horley and the house of Austin. The summer of our fortune had evidently returned with all its luxuriance and rich undergrowth. The kindest attentions were offered; our company was wanted everywhere at the same time; and, what was more striking, we were addressed by Mr. Horley, for the first time during these last seven years, with all the courtesies of former days.

This change is easily explained; Mr. Horley could now boast of his daughter at "the Rectory," and as to poor me, of whom he had many a time spoken contemptuously as a pauper, he could now call me his "son-in-law, the Rector of Elkerton," and even speak as if he were connected with "the family at Norlands."

Mr. Horley, too, was now invalided and gouty: dining out was prohibited; and no other kind of going out is practicable in the country. It is all very easy to say, "Drop in and see us at any time, in the friendly way;" but we cannot *drop* two or three miles, with footman and coachman too, who are as much bent on a party below-stairs as we are in the parlour. Mrs. Horley had found out she could not visit if her husband ceased to do so. Indeed, people did not want her. Visiting Bowdon Hall was one thing—Mrs. Horley sailing into the room alone was quite another thing. She shone only by reflected light; and this they contrived to let her know, saying, "Poor Mr. Horley! How amiable!—how little like husbands in general, to be satisfied to be left at home all by himself."

There is such a thing as "genteel abuse," and the conventional impertinence of the upper circles. In low life people call each other rogues, knaves, and improper characters; in genteel life things equally offensive are conveyed in a roundabout way.

Mrs. Horley, finding that she could not visit with a gouty

husband, hailed the news of Elkerton Rectory as somewhere to go, and something to do; for, with Mrs. Horley, as with other ladies, the dullest of all dull places was that particular place in which her husband resolved to live. One thing was quite plain, from the tone and tenor of Mr. Horley's letter, that the idea of his daughter, and consequently his own dignity, being compromised by any loan from Lady Oxton—this, as Mr. Meadows rightly judged, would not be entertained for an instant.

But my dear mother's letter was, indeed, refreshing. She said how she had, for years, grieved over Lachford as the very grave of ourselves and children,—that she had rarely sat down to a meal without thinking what kind of meal there was for us, and that those dear children—for, our children were evidently far more engrossing to her than ourselves—would look so pretty and rosy at Elkerton, in proper pure air, and with plenty of good wholesome food. And how convenient was Elkerton!—near enough for her to come and see us, and play with her little darlings.

This was all very natural. Nothing freshens up an old lady like the sight of her grandchildren. Still, we felt rather touchy at being told we had been starved!

Of course, the news spread fast in Lachford: by noon every one had heard the story, "with variations," and it acted like a touchstone to show the real nature of people. Some, from whom we expected not a word, shook us cordially with both hands, and said, how happy they were to see us restored to our proper sphere. Others, whose congratulations we never doubted, came with forced civilities on their lips, when all the while it was evident that envy at our good fortune was chilling and curdling every word they uttered.

This was especially true of Mrs. Vine. For, Mrs. Vine was never quite at ease in Ellen's company, always feeling that Ellen had been accustomed to a better circle than herself, and attracted more attention from the clergy who met at the Rectory; and now the Rectory of Lachford sounded poor, indeed, in comparison with the "Norlands living"—for so it was called,—and the aristocratic society of Elkerton.

The people of Lachford were always gasping for something fresh—news as well as air. The "good fortune of the poor Austins," with "I am sure they wanted it badly enough," was on every tongue; and now we seemed, with our interesting promotion, to be the common property of the town at large. Numbers felt a day's importance from the great and exciting news they were bursting to tell. If the story had been one of ruin, or an

"execution" of our goods or ourselves—for Pump Street, with the County Gaol round the corner, we knew, had seen an execution of both kinds more than once—it would have done as well, or perhaps better, for some people. Our good fortune lost nothing in the telling. But we need not wonder that our elevation was exaggerated; for, the richer we were represented, the more exciting was the news, and the more importance it reflected on the tellers.

Experience had by this time taught me to discern the wide difference between true friends and false.

Ellen said she could number a few humble friends never to be forgotten: but, as for those of the swallow tribe—as ready now to spread their fine feathers in the sunshine as they had before been to fly before the winter of our fortunes—she rejoiced in the Sackvilles' carriage, as enabling her to move above the level of their false and repulsive attentions. But she had one little plan of her own. One long morning she must spend in Pump Street: indeed, besides necessary arrangements with the person in charge of the house, she felt that she had received great mercies in that lowly abode. Three babes had been born there; and she must be left there for a short time to her own meditations alone.

Her thoughts and feelings were too sacred for me here to express in words; but—if it be given to the spirits of the blest to float around those loved ones from whom, amidst the fondest yearnings of the hearts, they have been untimely snatched away—I could picture the pale and feeble figure of a pious woman kneeling at a certain bedside in prayer, and the faint outline of some angelic form poised above, and overshadowing her with seraphic wings.

"And part of this little plan, Ellen," I said, "I may guess to be to order a little luncheon there, with plenty of cake and wine to regale the infant luggage-trains, and the little coffin-makers, too."

"Yes, I would, indeed, invite the Tinsons and the Gregsons. Now, do not laugh at them. I must show them a little attention before I go: and if the poor creatures should ever want change of air—as we know, indeed, they must—I shall not be compromised by a kind action of this kind even at Elkerton Rectory. Then there are among our furniture many little articles not worth moving, which we can distribute among these friends. Add to this, you must provide me with a bag of half-crowns to leave a substantial P. P. C. at the houses of the poor. Some cards in envelopes, for slight and formal acknowledgments, will amply repay

divers inattentions; and this will set us free as regards nine out of ten of our more fashionable acquaintances."

"And what did I do with my church and parish?" The tidings that a benefice—so it was euphuistically termed—was vacant, I was soon called on to confirm: so I easily arranged with one of many clergymen, ambitious of promotion, to give him my stipend—together with the prestige of being already the officiating minister at the church which he intended to solicit—in return for his services in my parish till such time as I had formally resigned. Three auctioneers requested the honour of selling off my furniture. But Ellen received a hint from Mrs. Sackville that our names would probably be advertised, on flaring handbills, all over the town, with—"The valuable furniture and effects of the Rev. Henry Austin, now to be seen at his residence in Pump Street!" and as all our little feelings of pride began to return to their old quarters very fast, this touch of the ridiculous we contrived to avoid, by ordering some few packages to be made of the better part, with a private sale to dispose of the remainder.

But—after seven years—to part from my parishioners, and those of the poorest class, and many old and sick people dependent on my kindness and sympathy,—this is no slight trial for any feeling heart.

There was Eliza Weedon in a deep decline, and it went to my heart to tell the poor young woman that another minister must finish what I had begun.

There was old Hannah Freeman, whom I had promised that she should be buried as near as possible to her daughter's grave, and this promise she now asked me how I could provide to fulfil!

There were also many old people who, as they had usually received the alms, had now learnt to depend on it as an integral part of their income; sixpence a-week of that money had long paid old Molly Hall's rent, who was thus enabled to spend more on her tea and her snuff, which were "the chief of her diet."—I promised to pay the rent of her one room as long as she lived: Molly was then ninety-four, and she lived to be ninety-eight!

But it was evident in other respects that my departure unsettled everything. The next minister, full well they knew, would be beset by all the inveterate impostors of the place, and little chance had the feeble and the bed-ridden in making known their honest claims amidst so artful and so clamorous a throng.

Besides, I had become the friend of many a poor, toiling, suffering family. A passing word would often suffice to break the monotony of their irksome existence, and sweet indeed is the

music of our speech to those poor souls, who, were it not for their minister, would rarely hear a kind and sympathetic word.

This will show with what pain a pastor tears himself from his parish, and how many, he feels, he leaves behind who will be "sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they will see his face no more."—However, I had remained as long, or longer, than I had any right to remain. I had outstayed my health and strength, and power to do my duty satisfactorily in so laborious a parish; and—I wonder how many pastors at this hour, worn out by heavy duty without doors, and a heavy heart within, are trying hard to reconcile their duty to their family with their duty to their God!

It was on a Tuesday that Mr. Meadows stipulated on behalf of Lady Oxton—it was his own suggestion to her ladyship—that we should immediately prepare to leave. On the Saturday following Dr. Sackville's carriage conveyed us to the station, and with such allusions to our next happy meeting as may well be supposed, a husband, wife, and four children and a nurse, looking like a sickly family in quest of health, bade adieu to the town of Lachford.*

* Another poor, toiling Henry Austin—quite a working clergyman, in every respect a gentleman—with a wife and family—one miserable from poverty though ministering to the affluent—the author will be most happy to point out to any other Lady Oxton, in the West-end of London.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW, SETTLING IN ELKERTON, WE WERE UNSETTLED AFTER ALL —HOW THE WIDOW HORLEY DOES NOT BETTER HERSELF— AND HOW DIFFERENT MEMBERS OF OUR FAMILY THOUGHT THEY COULD DO A GREAT DEAL BETTER IF THEY HAD THEIR TIME OVER AGAIN—AND HOW LADIES SHOULD BEWARE OF CERTAIN GENTLEMEN IN BLACK.

In all our doubts and fears for the future, one thing is too often left out of the calculation; namely, how all the pieces in the game of life are insensibly shifted by Father Time. Ten years make a mighty change. Our estate in expectancy comes nearer to possession; death makes gaps in the family circle, so our share becomes larger; and, perhaps, some aged relation is glad to offer us a home for our company and our care. Besides, family feuds wear out; new calls on new-comers seem like a thrice-told tale; and our own relations prove the best friends after all, in irritable old age—so truly "the winter of our discontent."

All this Mr. Horley had begun to realise. The more pretty frocks and playthings he gave to our children, the less suspicious he probably was of the silent reproaches of his motherless daughter Ellen. It was also easy to read in Ellen's tender looks, scrrow and compassion for her evidently declining father. At one time he had almost quarrelled with me for disgracing the family, and putting it in the power of a certain invidious neighbour to associate Bowdon Hall with Pump Street. But now, he found out I was "not so bad a fellow after all," simply because in the days of his goutiness he found that others were so much worse. For, Mr. Horley discovered, like many a man before him, that where there is neither wine nor wit for entertainment, and a man has lived all for self, a stray card of inquiry may be brought up on a waiter, but not a soul without "expectations" will be ushered into his closely-curtained room.

Ten years' worldly experience had taught me to think more kindly of the old gentleman: for, I brought away from Lachford

a very different estimate of human perfection than I took with me, and I had learnt to look with sorrow upon sin, and to regard it as own child of luxury and ease; and, indeed, in my heart I do pity that prosperity which dazzles the eye to things as they are, and scorches and withers every delicate fibre of the soul.

Ellen's remarks were a study to me. She said on a day of pianoforte tuning, "It seems to me, Harry, as if we had been tuned. Poor dear aunt! I don't think she could strike such notes of discord in me, if she were alive now." She said at another time, "The greatest relief I feel is, that my whole mind no longer centres in half-pounds and half-pence as it used to do. Really, for some months, I could not see an honest helping of a joint of meat, without my old fears of that 'unkindest cut of all,' which would leave too little for the morrow."

We were now at Bowdon Hall, where Mr. Horley, after many weeks of almost solitary confinement, with only drives in a close carriage, and all visiting at an end, was very glad of our company; as also was Mrs. Horley, too.

This lady found things marvellously changed for the worse. There was not one pivot on which the Bowdon day used to turn but now was gone. No one dropped in to luncheon; the post brought little else but circulars; and the newspaper lost its interest. There was, perhaps, something to "take four times a-day," and a pretty good talk to be had out of the doctor, and that had been all their variety; so, all this monotony it was delightful to have broken by taking the children to grandpapa, and by discussing all kinds of plans about Elkerton. For, I may here mention that the old Rector was dead, and my appointment gazetted in the usual manner. The county paper contained an article to the following effect:—

"We are happy to hear the Lord Chancellor has appointed the Rev. Henry Austin, son-in-law of Thomas Horley, Esq., of Bowdon Hall, to the beautiful Rectory of Elkerton. This living adjoins the estate of Norlands, and has usually been held, as we hear it will be in this present instance, by a family honoured by the friendship of the noble house of Oxton."

After this article appeared, Mr. Meadows had not much difficulty in raising money. His way of putting the case to Mr. Horley was very ingenious. He talked of Bowdon Hall as about to be connected with the grandeur of Norlands; and then he spoke of money for our furnishing, and a little capital to begin with; and how he might advise Lady Oxton to take such security as I could give if ——

"Not for the world!" said Mr. Horley.

Of course not. All the charms of genteel sensations—all the beams expected to fall obliquely from Norlands upon Bowdon, would be lost indeed by a single mendicity act like that.

"Then," said Mr. Meadows, "you will yourself make the advance of part of your daughter's fortune at interest?"

This was agreed, so far.

But Mr. Meadows carried the siege one step further.

"The capital then being provided, your life-interest in the amount required will be but a trifle you know, Mr. Horley."

"Oh! never mind the interest," said the father. "Indeed, the whole state of the case is altered now. While my daughter seemed married to a man who—who—I mean to say, while things were too bad to admit of mending, there was little inducement to throw money away; but now here is some solid satisfaction. The Rector had some good things in his rooms: we must contrive to buy up these, and you must help us to a valuation. I should like to see things comfortable, and Ellen is a nice, dear girl," he said, warming up to a good paternal simmer; though really I could not help thinking that Ellen was not at all a nicer girl than when he left her to pine away in Pump Street. "And my expenses," he continued, "now are small. I have done with those ruinous dinner-parties"—here Mrs. Horley groaned—"so I can afford to help the young people a little."

While thus our circumstances were mending, we both were fast mending too, as well we might: for, we had better air to breathe, relief to our brains, and a generous diet, without thinking of the cost. But one thing was more vital than all—we could indulge in the genial emotions of the heart. We now were loving and being loved. All that used to jar on our tastes and feelings was far away, and we lived in a daily sunshine of hope and happiness.

However, it surprised every one to see how little we were elated. My dear mother talked of nothing but Elkerton, and what we should do, and how happy we should be; and she complained at last that we did not seem to realise it, and scarcely appeared to her to believe it was all true. She did not understand, we had been so long tossed at the mercy of the winds and waves of fortune, that rest and repose were all we yet could think of; also, that we were too far subdued by long years of disappointment to be very quickly elated again. Then my mother proposed parties within doors and pic-nics out. She must do something

to celebrate the event—she must do something to amuse us; "what should it be?"

All we wanted was to be left to wander from one home to the other, or to lie on the green slopes, or to help the gleaners in the cornfield, or to listen to the creaking waggon or the farm-yard cries, and follow out the associations of childish days gone by.

"I never in my life did see two such poor worn-out creatures!" said my father. "Most truly did nurse say, you looked both dragged all to pieces."

And now my sister Fanny came to compare notes matrimonial. She had married a naval officer in spite of my father's prudent advice, and was now a widow.

Good advice with my father, it will be understood by this time, was like medicine with a doctor—the last thing he ever thought of taking himself. He foretold wrecks at sea and courts-martial ashore, and said there was no being up to those sailors—one whom he remembered had a wife in every port!

Well, this was a strange match. Fanny's husband was ten months at sea to two ashore;—very like an alliance between a fowl and a duck. This kept them very polite to each other when they did meet, and always on their best behaviour; but when at last he settled ashore, Fanny could not submit to his amphibious ways; and he one day declared that he could command five hundred men, but one mutinous woman was more refractory than them all.

"Now, was not I right," said Fanny, "when I told you about marrying a 'settler?' Yes, you were a happy man to secure Ellen. When once we are married we don't know where we may be thrown, or what new life we may have to lead. Fancy poor me, dragged about from Portsmouth to Plymouth, or Plymouth to Portsmouth, and watching the weather-vane, or reading with anxious eyes the news of her Majesty's navy! My husband never saw me nurse an infant in his life—they were all strong children before he came home; and he never saw Teddy till he could run alone. And he, poor fellow, was living on weevily biscuits and salt meat, and the worst of water to wash it down! Really, Harry, you were better off in Pump Street. Who ever heard of such an apology for matrimony! What woman ever had such a life as mine!"

Fanny was not the first woman who has married into a life of care, where she fondly yearned for a life of affection.

And now I must ask my reader to take a flying leap over

from six to seven months. He knows all about entering a new house with new servants and new visitors, when you can hardly find your way about, and are afraid of running counter to the customs of the place.

It is a fine day at the end of May. The greenhouse is being emptied into the flower-beds; a middle-aged lady and gentleman are helping us—these are Dr. and Mrs. Sackville. One pale and sickly little child is making a kind of dirt-pie in a miniature garden in the corner, assisted by my Alice and her little sister. That is Mrs. Tinson's child, benefited at once by the skill of the Doctor and the fresh air of Elkerton. They remained with us three weeks, and while they were with us we received one of many visits from Lady Oxton.

It was remarked by Thucydides, that the favours we confer cement friendship more firmly than the favours which we receive; because it is natural to take an interest and to watch the fruits of our own actions. These fruits, indeed, her Ladyship abundantly enjoyed. She said she never did see a more happy family, and it was quite a lesson to any spoilt child of luxury to see how simple were our pleasures, and how slight a thing would touch a chord to vibrate harmoniously to our very souls.

Lady Oxton was much pleased when I mentioned Ellen's idea that our feelings were once far from the proper tone and harmony, but after seven years' tuning we felt that no mere imaginary causes would disturb us. I reminded her also of Paley's remark; what a merciful adaptation is it that forbids every colour in creation to be painful to the eye, and every sound to be jarring to the ear. "I see," said her Ladyship; "and you would add, How great is the blessing to find everything that happens to us working together for good, because in unison with a truly chastened heart!"

Thankful as we were for all we enjoyed, it was not at the first visit that we could either of us express our feelings to her Ladyship. Naturally, our hearts were too full for commonplace words, and we saw intuitively that this noble friend in need was hurrying from one topic to another, purposely to avoid any formal acknowledgment. However, there was no mistaking the gratitude of Ellen's manner, as she pointed out everything about the Rectory, and explained all the comforts and advantages, and then said very elegantly, "I sincerely hope Mr. Meadows has truthfully pictured the very trying position from which your Ladyship's kindness has delivered us. One day, it may be, another Mr. Meadows, and perhaps a *Mrs.* Meadows too, may be wanted to give

effect—indeed, to assist once more in changing some cottage to a palace."

"And then I am sure," said Lady Oxton, "you will most kindly assist me. You look upon me, then, as the good-natured Fairy. Yes, to command wealth and influence is like holding the wand of the enchanter! It is a great power; but then it is a great responsibility. Only suppose I had been the means of placing in this rectory a family unfitted for the charge! But our wand is far less potent than you may imagine. To distinguish a true case of suffering undeserved is very difficult, especially for those who see with others' eyes. When young, I used to regard adversity as a presumption of innocence; but experience has convinced me that it is too often the result of reckless imprudence, or other causes too deeply seated to be reached by me."

On another occasion, Lady Oxton gave yet freer vent to her feelings.

"I began life," she said, "with a very romantic kind of philanthropy; but disappointment in my schemes of charity soon taught me that nothing valuable is accomplished without personal labour and anxious investigation—least of all, the privilege of doing good. When we buy, we look for our money's worth: when we give, it is quite as natural to look for some return in satisfaction—that is, we expect the seed we sow will fructify; and it is the greatest satisfaction to me now to come and see you and Mr. Austin so happy, and to assist you in your school and clubs, and various encouragements to the poor people around you."

Such were the feelings and the interest in us evinced by Lady Oxton. She was at that time in her widow's mourning, and about sixty years of age, according to the *Peerage;* and sorrow had combined with age to add dignity to her pale but high-born cast of features.

The interest Lady Oxton conceived for Ellen was increased by the deep impression that had been made by the cruel fate of Ellen's unhappy mother. For, the first Mrs. Horley had been on two occasions a guest at Norlands.

I should explain, that about once in two years it came to the turn of the principal families in our neighbourhood to be invited to Norlands. For, partly from neighbourly feeling and partly to make a return for kind offices, either political or professional, invitations were sent periodically to the county families, as well as to the banker, the physician, and the mayor of Bowdon—a party of about fifteen in all—to come as on a Monday and return on the Thursday, and so to enjoy two clear days of the rides, and

drives, and shooting, hunting, or fishing, besides two dinner-parties, with Lord and Lady Oxton.

This, with most of the guests, was a kind of friendship which began and ended with the visit; but the first Mrs. Horley was received in the morning in her Ladyship's boudoir, and even consulted as to the nursery arrangements—a kind of conversation between two ladies which always marks something more than a mere conventional intimacy. Now, Lord Oxton, though a far better husband than Mr. Horley, was at the same time so hard and unsympathetic in his nature, that her Ladyship would naturally have a fellow-feeling for any lady who, she had heard, was by no means happy in her home. What wonder, then, that the cruel history of Mrs. Horley's death—happening not long after Lady Oxton's recovery from the birth of a daughter, the only daughter she ever had, who lived but three months—that this memory should burn deep into the indignant soul of Lady Oxton, and dispose her to look with all a mother's tenderness on Ellen?

It was thus that an intimacy arose, as flattering as it was charming to ourselves, and at the same time a comfort and a resource to Lady Oxton. For, all persons, however much of high degree, find by the age of sixty that they are beginning to stand alone in the world; also, that there is a pliant temper and a happiness of disposition in the society of young people truly refreshing to their failing spirits; and this society, as it no longer comes of itself, they are but too glad to be at a little pains to cultivate. And so by degrees her Ladyship heard all of our eventful history. The story of the "basket-fortune" amused her very much. For, how persons with small incomes afforded to dress she never could imagine. But now she discovered that the poor relation was supplied with fine feathers from all the family.

Lady Oxton, by little and little, disclosed her history also.—Happiness, she once remarked, was far more equally divided than was supposed by the humble, when they envied the great. Noblemen were supposed free from the wearing anxiety about money which we had suffered, and that exemption was no little privilege; but even this they did not always enjoy. There was liberty of action with a fortune in the funds, but an entailed estate must be kept up; and if we looked around the country we should see, at the most delightful part of the year, a "basket-fortune" was all the owners enjoyed: the steward and the gardener had all the beauties to themselves.

"My life, Mrs. Austin," she once said, "as compared with yours, has had no balance of blessings on its side. You married

for affection, risking poverty: we too often marry for position, and risk, or rather sacrifice, a life of affection. You know how improving is adversity: you can imagine what kind of character to expect in the spoilt child of prosperity. And such were all the young men among whom my lot was cast—selfish, self-pleasers, most truly 'lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.'

"I had a dear, pious mother, who early imbued me with a sense of religion. But religious ladies were very rare in my youth; even gambling was a temptation and besetting sin among ladies in those days! Follow out in your mind the evil passions stirred to their darkest depths by a wicked thirst for gain; add to this, that the safeguards of all female delicacy and reserve must then be thrown down,—think what must have been the tone of society generally where these things were countenanced, and you will then feel for any Christian woman doomed to move in such a guilty sphere. You are old enough to remember the Sabbath profanation at the Zoological Gardens, till every London pulpit raised a voice against so bad an example. Yes, and even now [not now, 1860], you may see carriages three-deep in Hyde Park, with Saturday nights preferred for plays and operas, and Mondays appointed for entertainments, necessitating Sabbath desecration and robbing the worn-out workmen of their day of rest and season of prayer. Through all this I have lived, in one painful struggle to reconcile my duty to my husband to my duty to my God!

"Now, there are three hundred and sixty-five days in each long year—unhappy days are very long—every one of these days a woman's heart—yet more, a wife's; ay, and yet more still, the heart of a mother—may enjoy conditions of happiness to be sought in vain in the giddy crowd of heartless fashion; and every one of those days she may desire desperately to plunge into the maddest scenes of that Vanity Fair, to forget or to lull the thrill of agony which the insulted woman, the injured wife, or the chilled and neglected mother, may daily find piercing her to the heart.

"Young men of high position, it is most gratifying to see, are now often bent on better things. My good friend, Lord ——, truly said,—

"'The aristocracy will, indeed, be 'the cheap defence of nations' when—as they seem to promise now—they vie with each other in schemes of enlightened charity, and when they not only stand between the people and the crown, but when, as it were, they establish a new feudal system, and live to 'deliver the poor that cried, and the fatherless orphan that had none to help him.' However, young men in my youth were too often spendthrifts and

roués, and many a lady in my station has confessed she never knew the happiness of pure affection; and wealth is, indeed, a poor compensation for the untold riches of a composed and cheerful heart. Many persons will remark, What are ten thousand acres to the man, a pale prisoner of one close chamber? but few consider that, to all this world's state and pageantry we may truly say, 'Miserable comforters are ye all!' when the ostrich plume surmounts a racking brain, or diamonds sparkle over anguish at the heart.'"

Amidst all this happiness, our friends will suspect we were in a fair way of being spoilt, for prosperity is more trying than adversity; nor does anything betray the proud castle of the human heart as certainly as luxury and ease. If man is an "instrument of a thousand strings" it is not one "tuning" which will serve for a life.

Seven years had now passed at Elkerton. Mr. Horley had been three years dead, and a small estate of 500*l.* a-year had been added to our family purse. One more daughter had been added to the nursery, and one son. My sister, Fanny Bowyer—"Widow Bowsprit," as my father called her—our frequent visitor, observed on the first occasion, "Now I can really congratulate you on children born in a genteel and proper manner, where there's room to rock the cradle amidst all the comforts of Elkerton; but, really, your other children, Harry, as my poor Captain said, did seem smuggled into the world as such contraband little articles, that they were positively received with three cheers of groans all round the family."

This sister Fanny is a good managing mother. She kept on worrying the service to do something for "my boy Thomas," till the boy Thomas was as well known at the Admiralty as "the boy Jones" was at Buckingham Palace. Fanny's eldest girl is now leaving school, and the mother seems resolved, if talking can possibly effect it, to warn her against many things "which she would never do if her time were to come over again." So, many a woman has imagined, little reflecting that impulse and instinct ever will prove more than a match for sober reason.

I need hardly say, that all that crop of courtesies and attentions, which became so suddenly and so significantly abundant at Lachford, were by this time far more abundant than ever. We were now worth conciliating. To be on visiting terms with the Austins was worth talking of, and the more our intimacy at Norlands was exaggerated, the greater was the honour we were supposed to reflect.

We often said, our experience ought indeed to set compliments at their proper worth. But, if I honestly analyse our feelings, I am afraid we have felt pleased and hallucinated all the same; for, it is with flattery as it is with fortune-telling, however much we may be too wise to believe it, pleasant words leave a pleasurable sensation all the same.

Amongst others who now thought us worth conciliating was Mrs. Horley, and she took the best possible means of doing so. She readily concurred in a little exchange I proposed, and gave up the beautiful pearl sprig to Ellen; and Ellen had the pleasure of seeing her child sit on her lap and feel the pretty ornament with curious fingers, as she had done before with *her own* dear mother. Ellen was now disposed to look with more interest on the step-mother, though the little "attentions," added to the weekly basket, and, above all, the notice she took of her children, had previously made an impression.

And now the Widow Horley was "the best fun going." Her first was, as we have seen, a match of convenience: but, now that she had money, she thought she could pick and choose. But first, a year must pass—a most odious year, turning forty-nine (about) into half-a-hundred—in some countries they bury widows alive: Mrs. Horley complained that English customs, in one sense, did the same—but at the end of that time her weeds were quickly torn up by the roots. She was all hope and happiness at reaching the end of this cruel year: so much like a year of quarantine, while actually in the sight of a pleasant land.

Of course she had no want of suitors; but here was the difficulty:—Of old gentlemen she had had enough, and too much; and of that class of young men base enough to marry one nearly old enough for their mother, the real character was too easy to read, and one of the discarded had exclaimed in a billiard-room he could not carry on the farce with a serious face. Experience in wedlock made the lady very wary.

"One thing," said our widow, "I have found out in married life. If you do make an unlucky choice, there is a general conspiracy to keep you closely to your bargain. It is no use to complain; you are only laughed at. I really do believe people used to show extra attention to Mr. Horley when he was more than usually vexatious to me."

But at length Mrs. Horley received attentions she could not doubt. The Rev. Arthur Shark, a neat-looking little man of about thirty-five, quite a popular preacher in the town of Manton, began to say soft things to Widow Horley. The name of "Re-

verend," alone, I am proud to say, commands unbounded confidence, as regards credit of all kinds; but to be a popular preacher, too, lulled all suspicion. "Evangelical sound without evangelical sense,"* and that mystifying transcendentalism that I always suspect when I hear of a *fine* sermon — that is, something suspected to be very beautiful, but wherein its beauty consists the ecstatic congregation cannot tell — this was the secret of his profane success. Even his ignorance was an advantage to him, because "his nonsense suited their nonsense."

Certainly, if we were to work the problem, "Given the disgraceful nonsense of the preacher to find how foolish the people were," Mr. Shark's sermons would have demonstrated hundreds fit for Bedlam, — a remark too true of more than one congregation of popular preachers in my experience. No sooner did I hear the Rev. A. Shark, than I protested against such horrible pulpit theatricals, — for such it was, and the dramatic element was the whole charm. There was acting; there was a contagious excitement in tone and manner; there was occasional narrative of some penitent felon or dying smuggler, and other means of dramatic interest, besides awful denunciations as the principle of terror — called "strong doctrines" — in short, it was Sunday theatricals, or sacred melodrame.

Would that there were in this respect only one Rev. A. Shark! Would that men of purer intentions — men who would never deceive others had they not first deceived themselves — would that they always remembered that the true flock may be "a little flock," and that a congregation which disperses with sparkling eyes, and "Were n't you highly delighted, Mrs. Brown?" is a little more likely to praise the preacher than when he sends them away pricked to the heart with "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

This was one occasion on which I did feel that the preacher should be taken out of his pulpit and sent to the treadmill for profane babbling and imposture, and this I said plainly on my return home. "Yes, yes, Mr. Austin," said the widow, rather nettled, "'two of a trade can never agree:' let me see you draw such a congregation as Mr. Shark's, that's all."

Of course, my warnings were of no use to one who parried in this manner. Every hint — for hints there were, of his real character — was set down to jealousy, and turned to an evidence of his striking superiority. So, Mrs. Horley and the Rev. A. Shark were soon engaged to be married.

* See p. 209.

This, Mr. Shark announced most industriously at the earliest moment; nay, even before it was a fact, he had himself circulated the report at the town of Axfield, in which he had last been "known and trusted." My friend Edwards gave a certain tailor of Axfield a hint to apply for his bill. "Not yet," says Mr. Snip. "My bill is long enough to frighten a young maid, much more an experienced widow who knows what bills are. Let them just come out of church, and then I shall mark them down." More than one Axfield man would have told Mr. Shark's antecedents, but his former dupes were now his advocates, and begged for mercy and not to spoil the poor man's prospects by any precipitate demands.

The intended wedding was announced. But before the nuptial day it happened that supper, and grog after supper, enabled, as grog sometimes will, certain persons not doctors to "diagnose" the latent cause of a certain redness like that which, on and off, completed the picture of a blushing bridegroom in Mr. Shark. "He is a jolly fellow," said Mr. Sheepskin the attorney, who, being for one week a bachelor, had offered him a little refreshment after service, and ended with a cigar and a quiet glass down in the office.

For "men of the world," like Mr. Sheepskin, feel quite a relief when the lax practice of the parson seems to qualify the rigour of the pulpit. "He is up to snuff," said old Captain Burney, his churchwarden, with a very red nose, and three ill-favoured daughters, who looked upon every new curate as one chance more.

"Don't you agree with me, Mr. Sheepskin, that that widow had better come to you for a settlement?" Mr. Sheepskin said nothing: but he told me afterwards a writ from Axfield had been sent him to serve: but he added, "If lawyers told all they knew, society would be in a pretty state."

The end of all this was, that Mrs. Horley became indissolubly linked to a drunken, profligate character. She paid his debts till she was tired of it. She dreaded the jeers of society too much very readily to acknowledge her misery, though the worst of characters, even for swindling charity funds, followed him who was now her husband, wherever she went!

Then came the explanation. "Why, sir," said a tradesman to me, "this fellow is no regular-bred clergyman. He is one of our Bishop's Literates. He has never been to any college, and perhaps never was worth his father's spending any money on him. It is shameful of the Church to impose on society in this way. I never

lost a penny by trusting the clergy in my life. Place a man in your pulpit for one or two Sundays, and he may walk into any tradesman's shop and receive credit, as if by the Church's own introduction. We ask a reference with all other men. The loan of a pulpit, as we know the system of testimonials at each remove, is satisfaction enough. I don't approve of these Literates. *It is just like the system of ticket-of-leave convicts;* honest men are the sufferers"—(I quote the exact words)—"and I trust we shall have no more of them."

As to Literates, the system is full of danger. Who are the men most likely to apply? Men from five-and-twenty to five-and-thirty years of age, who either have had no profession, or who have succeeded in none; a class that comprises a large number of ne'er-do-wells and adventurers, whose friends are often—too often, I have observed—most unscrupulous in giving testimonials full of the virtues they wish them to have.

The title of Reverend in the family of a country tradesman is like a Peerage to us. We may well scrutinize the motive of the Minister, when the call is so tempting to the *Man.*

I have said enough (pp. 17, 75, and 97) to show how society is protected from unworthy ministers; but without the University degree there is no security.

An acquaintance of mine, in the diocese of Exeter, had persuaded a clergyman, well deserving of credit, to procure his ordination as a Literate. At the same time, to have two strings to his bow, he was canvassing for the office of Master of the Ceremonies at a fashionable town! The fear of the examination happily stopped him; but as to his testimonials, they would have been quite satisfactory!

Certainly I did know a case of a Literate an honour to the Church. But he had a profession, and was actually succeeding (as a solicitor) at the time he was ordained.

But how did this man ever obtain testimonials after his first disgrace? Let this be a caution to bishops and clergy. His testimonials could not have been signed by men who had an opportunity of knowing his conduct.

No bishop ought ever to receive or to countersign testimonials not signed by applicant's last rector, without particular inquiry. At this present date I could mention a man of the worst of characters, who, after his first disgrace, has held preferment in four several dioceses. In the third of these dioceses he was forbidden to officiate more. In this time he has been engaged to three different young ladies—no little household misery is involved in this

heartless case—all through laxity in giving testimonials—and twice arrested for debt: and from my experience I do believe, that there is little difficulty in any Mr. Shark abusing the honourable confidence reposed so generously by tradesmen, and so hospitably by the best Christian families, and passing from one curacy to another.

Even while writing I have heard of one more swindler in canonicals—all for want of inquiry on the part of his Rector—cruelly abusing the hospitality of a Christian family.

Such I now publicly declare to be the insufficiency of clerical testimonials. *Clerical testimonials are positively worse than none. For, while the most unworthy can command them, they prevent all such inquiry as might stop the career of a profligate.* Why take a curate with a stereotyped character, when you refuse a parlour-maid with a written one? I should suggest, besides particular inquiries, that a *Si quis*, or notice of each new appointment, should be required to be given at all preceding parishes for three years.

I earnestly exhort Rectors to consider that our high social position—our chief compensation—is endangered by all who introduce curates, especially Literates, without strict private inquiry. This can only prejudice the unworthy.

I must now draw my history to an end with one very important topic more.

Remember, my clerical friends, when I was a single man "without encumbrance"—such is the polite generic for a wife—I felt "unsettled,"—too unsettled, I thought, for my office.

Secondly. When I was married I lived in comfort, with our aunt's assistance; but here I was unsettled and distracted from other causes.

Thirdly. I removed into lodgings, and the loneliness of my dear wife, and my eagerness to return from my visiting to walk or keep her company—for she was too timid to move without me in that crowded house—this again broke in upon my time.

Fourthly. I experienced poverty in Pump Street, and daily anxiety about daily bread, with a sole charge in a large parish, my heart wrung with the poor I could not relieve, and my strength and spirits prostrate with duties beyond my power. Here, indeed, I was distracted, and my mind by no means settled.

And, lastly, He who was pleased to bring me down to the very dust, was mercifully pleased to raise me up; exchanging poverty for affluence, and virtually saying to me, "With a mighty hand and stretched-out arm I have brought thee out, and have led thee

into a land of milk and honey, *that thou shouldest serve me.*" And what, now, has been my experience in the ease and plenty of Elkerton?

I honestly confess, that to this day I have had my distractions, and have been unsettled still. The causes have changed, but our enemy is bent upon diversions, and the effect has been to some extent the same. Numerous visitors have beset my house. The influence of a man in my position is solicited by a class of persons who once would never have honoured me with a thought. I have three servants, a governess, a gardener, and a groom, who are all mortal as myself. Then wages must be paid, work marked out and scrutinised; and last, not least, the governess and the children are equally unable to go alone, and Ellen likes some little attention too.

My father has been two years dead; and what with lawyers and Doctors' Commons, and those interminable letters from Somerset House, with three trusteeships and relatives always in difficulties, Ellen says I ought to keep a secretary. Add to this, Mrs. Horley is "separated:" I am her trustee under the "mutual arrangement;" and this lady, "neither widow nor wife," whenever that high-pressure engine, called a violent temper, is well-nigh bursting; "for, of course, never was there a woman so tried before in this mortal world;" then a letter, crossed and recrossed, and requiring a return-of-post reply from her unhappy trustee, is her only resource and safety-valve for superfluous energies. Only last week she wanted to know as to the new Divorce Court, if she "could not 'take the benefit' of the 'Cat-and-Dog Act!'" So here, again, I have my distractions.

These family duties involve a loss in point of time, if duly discharged. On the other hand, if not discharged, to see my sisters and mother in distress were a loss in point of time, and distraction, too.

Now I will not dishonour the Church by saying that a minister has become corrupted by luxury, and has culpably given way to these trifles, as one to "mind earthly things." But I do point out that these are the thorns — most veritably the thorns — that tend to choke the seed, and that the greatest self-searching and vigilance are required, lest "after preaching to others I myself should be a castaway;" and my full conviction is, that — *a very great part of a minister's probation in this life is to contend with temptations to irregularity, delay, and eventual neglect of duty — temptations very violent in poverty, but very trying and insidious in "the comforts and quietude of an English parsonage.*"

Such, then, are the diversions and distractions that beset the pastoral path of the Rev. Henry Austin of Elkerton. He does try to steer his course safely between the rocks and shoals that surround him, but never without a painful sense of his own shortcomings, and not without fear and trembling, too; and he does emphatically warn all young clergymen, — that the idea of being settled and free from distractions in the path of duty, is a vain dream and expectation — that the quiet little retreat imagination pictures, wherever the distant spire rises above some lofty elms, is not too quiet to have cares and anxieties peculiarly its own — and that we all must strive manfully against those little ties and greater hindrances from which, in some form or other, we never can be free. And, as to looking for a more convenient season, and waiting till we are "settled," to perform our several parts in this life, it is like waiting till the river shall have passed away, for a man never is "settled" in this world till he is settled at the bottom of his grave.

THE END.

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